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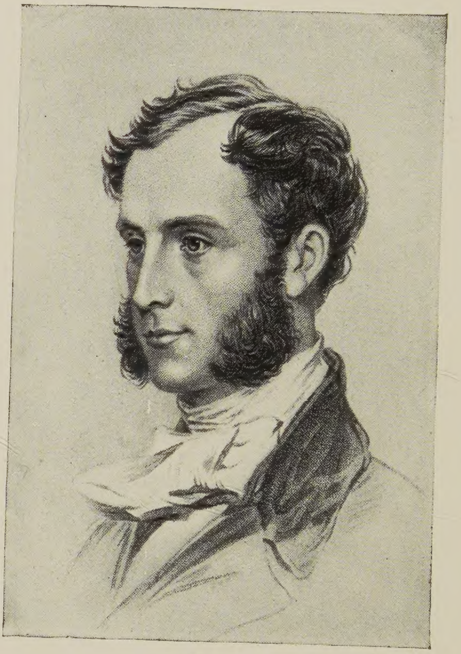

Sincerely & gratefully yours
Fred W Robertson

252
R546s
1930

SERMONS

PREACHED AT BRIGHTON

BY THE LATE

REV. FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON,

THE INCUMBENT OF TRINITY CHAPEL.

NEW EDITION.

NEW YORK AND LONDON:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

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TO

THE CONGREGATION

WORSHIPPING IN

TRINITY CHAPEL, BRIGHTON,

FROM AUGUST 15, 1847, TO AUGUST 15, 1853,

THESE

RECOLLECTIONS OF SERMONS

PREACHED BY THEIR LATE PASTOR

ARE DEDICATED.

[illegible]

PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION.

In publishing these Sermons, a few words of explanation are necessary.

They are not notes previously prepared, nor are they Sermons written before delivery. They are simply "Recollections:" sometimes dictated by the Preacher himself to the younger members of a family in which he was interested, at their urgent entreaty; sometimes written out by himself for them when they were at a distance and unable to attend his ministry.*

They have been carefully preserved, and are now published without corrections or additions, just as they were found. Mr. Robertson attached no value whatever to them, and never gave any directions concerning them. The only Sermon which saw the light in his lifetime is now republished in this volume, with his own preface, explaining how it was preserved, and that it was printed by desire of his congregation.

Unfortunately, in some instances this series is incomplete. The fourth of the Advent Lectures † was never written out, owing to his uncertain and suffering state of health; and this cause, combined with his remarkable dislike to recalling his discourses—a peculiarity known to all who were intimately acquainted with him—has made these recollections more broken and imperfect than they would otherwise have been.

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* A reference to a paragraph in his own preface to "The Israelite's Grave" (page 235) explains this.

† The fourth and last Advent Lecture was "The Jewish;" on the text, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."—John i. 11.

It is not necessary to say one word in this place of the character of Mr. Robertson's teaching; it is best illustrated in the published volumes of his Sermons; and yet it seems needful to say, that even these suggest but a very faint idea of the influence that teaching exercised on all who came within its sphere.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH SERIES.

IT is proposed shortly to issue a volume entitled "Pulpit Notes," which will consist of the skeleton or outline which Mr. Robertson prepared before delivering his Sermons. In some cases only a line or a single word is given to indicate a division of his subject; in others he has written out a *whole* thought, to be further amplified and completed in course of preaching.

The Editor believes that such a volume will be of service in two ways—first, as offering suggestions to preachers in the preparation or consideration of their addresses; and, secondly, as being sufficiently complete for purposes of home-reading where it is the custom at family prayers, or on Sundays, to read a short discourse, occupying but a few minutes.

With reference to the first of these, it seems to be felt very generally that the pulpit is not what it was originally intended to be. There is a wide-spread opinion that it was designed for the edification of the mind as well as the heart; and it may be that one great cause of the indifference with which men are said to listen to preachers, arises from the fact, that for the most part their addresses are far below the intelligence of their audience, who are wearied with the trite repetitions of platitudes that neither instruct nor inform. These Sermons and "Pulpit Notes" evidence the character of a teaching, not only earnestly listened to, but also most influential. Perhaps the contrast between these and the sermons usually preached, may suggest a means of re-awakening an interest now almost dormant in the minds of listeners. In this view, a volume will shortly be issued, and if it be found successful another will be put to press.

The Editor appends a portion of a letter from a friend on the subject of preaching, because it serves to show that the indifference he has adverted to springs from other causes than mere irreligiousness.

My dear ——,—I think one great need in our pulpit ministrations is naturalness; by which I mean an exact recognition of the facts of our daily life. The phrase, "the dignity of the pulpit," has given a fatally artificial character to the mass of sermons. Mr. Spurgeon and his vulgar slang is a violent reaction from the cold unfelt conventionalities with which men have grown so familiar; and his success is due to the fact that he recognizes the men and women before him as flesh and blood—sinning, suffering, tempted, failing, struggling, rising. Like all extreme reactions, it shocks a great many by its levity, its irreverence, and its vulgarity.

But it is in this direction must come our pulpit reform. We come day after day to God's house, and the most careless one of us there, is still one who, if he could really hear a word from God to his own soul, would listen to it—ay, and be thankful for it. No heart can tell out to another what waves of temptation have been struggled through during the week past—with what doubtful success. How, after the soul has been beaten down and defiled, with what bitter anguish of spirit it has awoke to a knowledge of its backslidings and its bondage to sin:—not to this or that sin merely, but to a general sense of sinfulness pervading the whole man, so that Redemption would be indeed a joyful sound.

Many are miserable in their inmost hearts, who are light-hearted and gay before the world. They feel that no heart understands theirs, or can help them. Now, suppose the preacher goes down into the depths of his own being, and has the courage and fidelity to carry all he finds there, first to God in confession and prayer, and then to his flock as some part of the general experience of Humanity, do you not feel that he must be touching close upon some brother-man's sorrows and wants? "Be ye as I am, for I am as ye are." Many a weary and heavy-laden soul has taken his burden to the Saviour, because he has found some man of "like passions with himself," who has suffered as he has, and found relief. I think a bold faithful experimental preaching rarely fails to hit some mark, and oftentimes God's Spirit witnesses to the truth of what is said, by rousing this and that man to the feeling, "Why I, too, have been agonizing, and falling, and crying for just such help as this. Ah, this man has indeed something to say to me."

* * * * * * * *

I may be wrong in my opinion, but it is one of deep conviction, gained long ago, that no amount of external evidence in the way of proof of the truth of Christianity is worth any thing in the way of saving a human soul.

There is always as much to be said on one side as the other, because, just as Archimedes could not move the earth without a fulcrum, so there must be something taken for granted in all external evidence, which a rigid logician might fairly demur to granting. But when, as with the Spirit of God, the voice of a man reaches his fellow-man, telling him of his inner aspirations and failures, his temptations, his sins, his weakness—not in generals, but in details—of light that has come and has been extinguished; of hopes born, yet not nourished; of fears which have grown stronger and stronger, and which refuse altogether to be silent, even in the midst of the engagements or pleasures of life—does not the man feel that here is a revelation of God's truth as real and fresh as if he had stood in the streets of Jerusalem, and heard the Saviour's very voice? The man feels that, in this word, which has, so to speak, "told him all that ever he did," there must be a divine life. "One touch of nature makes the whole word kin."

* * * * * * * *

I think that a ministry which should work mightily amongst a people would be one in which very rarely is heard any development of the *modus operandi* or "*plan* of salvation;" in which *proof* of the divine mission of Christ, or of God's revelation, was never attempted, but in which the great facts themselves were set forth as the alone solution of the wants, sorrows, and sins of the hearers; in which the fact of Adam's fall, and any consequences it had on the human race, were only touched upon incidentally; but in which the individual man's fall was pressed home upon him from his own certain convictions. Not because Adam fell, and the race fell in him, but because *you* have fallen—*therefore you* need a Saviour, and divine life and light are indispensable.

The man who quietly slumbers under Adam's sin and its tremendous consequences—his relation to which consequences how is it possible for a poor uneducated person to comprehend?—may be aroused to a sense of his connection with the fact of a fall in himself, and a need of such a restorer as Christ. I am sure I don't know whether this is orthodox or not; but I doubt whether orthodox creeds and confessions of doctrine have ever turned one soul from the error of his ways, or brought him in real earnest to Christ.

* * * * * * * *

Let us look at this boldly. Seventeen thousand pulpits echo in our land every Sunday, to what each preacher considers the soundest form of Christ's Gospel. Is it God's word that is preached? Has He changed His purpose? Has He ceased to care for man?—and does He no longer intend that "His word shall not return to him void?" Yet where is the divine evidence that it is His word which is preached, as shown in hearts quickened and aroused "about their Father's business?"

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CONTENTS.

First Series.

SERMON I.

Preached April 29, 1849.

GOD'S REVELATION OF HEAVEN.

1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" .... Page 23

SERMON II.

Preached June 6, 1849.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

CONFIRMATION LECTURE.

Matt. xiii. 1-9.—"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" 33

SERMON III.

Preached June 10, 1849.

JACOB'S WRESTLING.

CONFIRMATION LECTURE.

Gen. xxxii. 28, 29.—"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" .... Page 46

SERMON IV.

Preached August 12, 1849.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS BY OBLIVION OF THE PAST.

Phil. iii. 13, 14.—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" 57

SERMON V.

Preached October 21, 1849.

TRIUMPH OVER HINDRANCES—ZACCHEUS.

Luke xix. 8.—"And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" 68

SERMON VI.

Preached October 28, 1849.

THE SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE OF THE SABBATH.

Col. ii. 16, 17.—"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" 78

SERMON VII.

Preached November 4, 1849.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

Heb. iv. 15, 16.—"For we have not a high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" ....Page 88

SERMON VIII.

Preached November 11, 1849.

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES AT JOHN'S BAPTISM.

MATT. iii. 7.—"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" 99

SERMON IX.

Preached November 5, 1849.

CAIAPHAS'S VIEW OF VICARIOUS SACRIFICE.

JOHN xi. 49–53.—"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high-priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" 110

SERMON X.

Preached December 2, 1849.

REALIZING THE SECOND ADVENT.

JOB xix. 25–27.—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" 120

SERMON XI.

Preached December 6, 1849.

FIRST ADVENT LECTURE.

THE GREEK.

ROM. i. 14–17.—"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"......................Page 130

SERMON XII.

Preached December 13, 1849.

SECOND ADVENT LECTURE.

THE ROMAN.

ROM. i. 14–16.—"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"........ 137

SERMON XIII.

Preached December 20, 1849.

THIRD ADVENT LECTURE.

THE BARBARIAN.

ACTS xxviii. 1–7.—"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously"........... 148

SERMON XIV.

Preached December 15, 1849.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST.

GAL. vi. 7, 8.—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting".............. 158

SERMON XV.

Preached December 31, 1849.

THE LONELINESS OF CHRIST.

JOHN xvi. 31, 32.—"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me"........................Page 168

SERMON XVI.

Preached October 20, 1850.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

JOHN xiii. 34.—"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"........................ 177

SERMON XVII.

Preached June 15, 1851.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH TO MEN OF WEALTH.

1 SAM. xxv. 10, 11.—"And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?".............. 185

SERMON XVIII.

Preached June 22, 1851.

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT RESPECTING INHERITANCE.

LUKE xii. 13–15.—"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"............................ 198

SERMON XIX.

Preached July 13, 1851.

FREEDOM BY THE TRUTH.

JOHN viii. 32.—"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"........................ 209

SERMON XX.

Preached at the Autumn Assizes, held at Lewes, 1852.

THE KINGDOM OF THE TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. 37.—"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"....................Page 216

SERMON XXI.

Preached November 7, 1852.

THE SKEPTICISM OF PILATE.

JOHN xviii. 38.—"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?".................... 226

SERMON XXII.

Preached on the first day of Public Mourning for the Queen Dowager, Dec. 1849.

THE ISRAELITE'S GRAVE IN A FOREIGN LAND.

GEN. l. 24–26.—"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt".... 235

Second Series.

SERMON I.

Preached January 6, 1850.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.

MATT. ii. 1, 2.—"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him". 249

SERMON II.

Preached February 10, 1850.

THE HEALING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER.

MATT. ix. 23–25.—"And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, he said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose"……………………Page 257

SERMON III.

Preached March 10, 1850.

BAPTISM.

GAL. iii. 26-29.—"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"……… 267

SERMON IV.

Preached March 17, 1850.

BAPTISM.

1 PETER iii. 21.—"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us"……………………… 277

SERMON V.

Preached October 13, 1850.

ELIJAH.

1 KINGS xix. 4.—"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"………… 286

SERMON VI.

Preached January 12, 1851.

NOTES ON PSALM LI.

Written by David, after a double crime:—Uriah put in the fore-front of the battle—the wife of the murdered man taken, etc. ……………………… 293

SERMON VII.

Preached March 2, 1851.

OBEDIENCE THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

JOHN vii. 17.—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" ……………… 300

SERMON VIII.

Preached March 30, 1851.

RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION.

PSALM xlii. 1-3.—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"…….Page 308

SERMON IX.

Preached April 6, 1851.

FAITH OF THE CENTURION.

MATT. viii. 10.—"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"……………………… 313

SERMON X.

Preached July 27 1851.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ERRING.

GAL. vi. 1, 2.—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"…………………… 318

SERMON XI.

Preached Christmas Day, 1851

CHRIST THE SON.

HEB. i. 1, 2.—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"……………………… 327

SERMON XII.

Preached April 25, 1852.

WORLDLINESS

1 JOHN ii. 15-17.—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"……………………… 332

SERMON XIII.

Preached November 14, 1852

THE SYDENHAM PALACE, AND THE RELIGIOUS NON-OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

Rom. xiv. 5, 6.—"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks"................Page 343

SERMON XIV.

Preached January 2, 1853.

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS.

Luke ii. 40.—"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him"........................... 353

SERMON XV.

Preached January 9, 1853.

CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF SIN.

Luke xix. 10.—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"............................. 363

SERMON XVI.

Preached January 16, 1853

THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST.

John xvii. 19.—"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth"...... 372

SERMON XVII.

Preached January 23, 1853

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

I. THE GLORY OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

John ii. 11.—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him"............ ... 383

SERMON XVIII.

Preached January 30, 1853.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

II. THE GLORY OF THE DIVINE SON.

John ii. 11.—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him"...........Page 393

SERMON XIX.

Preached March 20, 1853

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

John x. 14, 15.—"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep"............. 404

SERMON XX.

Preached Easter Day, March 27, 1853.

THE DOUBT OF THOMAS.

John xx. 29.—"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"........................ 415

SERMON XXI.

Preached May 8, 1853.

THE IRREPARABLE PAST.

Mark xiv. 41, 42.—"And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand".................... 426

Third Series.

SERMON I.

Preached April 28, 1850.

THE TONGUE.

St. James iii. 5, 6.—"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell".................... 437

SERMON II.

Preached May 5, 1850.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

1 John v. 4, 5.—"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"..... 446

SERMON III.

Preached Whitsunday, May 19, 1850.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

1 Cor. xii. 4.—"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit"..Page 455

SERMON IV.

Preached May 26, 1850.

THE TRINITY.

1 Thess. v. 23.—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".......... 464

SERMON V.

Preached June 2, 1850.

ABSOLUTION.

Luke v. 21.—"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"........................... 476

SERMON VI.

Preached June 9, 1850.

THE ILLUSIVENESS OF LIFE.

Heb. xi. 8–10.—"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"............................ 487

SERMON VII.

Preached June 23, 1850.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.—"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again"..... 495

SERMON VIII.

Preached June 30, 1850.

THE POWER OF SORROW.

2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.—"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death"......................Page 504

SERMON IX.

Preached August 4, 1850.

SENSUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXCITEMENT.

Eph. v. 17, 18.—"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit".................. 510

SERMON X.

Preached August 11, 1850.

PURITY.

Titus i. 15.—"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled"......................... 516

SERMON XI.

Preached February 9, 1851.

UNITY AND PEACE.

Col. iii. 15.—"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful"............................. 522

SERMON XII.

Preached January 4, 1852.

THE CHRISTIAN AIM AND MOTIVE.

Matt. v. 48.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"....................... 530

SERMON XIII.

Preached January 4, 1852.

CHRISTIAN CASUISTRY.

1 Cor. vii. 18–24.—"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free,

is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price: be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God". Page 539

SERMON XIV.

Preached January 11, 1852.

MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY.

1 Cor. vii. 29–31.—"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away"............... 547

SERMON XV.

Preached January 11, 1852.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH A FAMILY.

Eph. iii. 14, 15.—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"........ 555

SERMON XVI.

Preached January 25, 1852.

THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE.

1 Cor. viii. 7–13.—"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"........................ 565

SERMON XVII.

Preached May 16, 1852.

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.—"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".....................Page 576

SERMON XVIII.

Preached June 20, 1852.

MAN'S GREATNESS AND GOD'S GREATNESS.

Isa. lvii. 15.—"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit"........ 588

SERMON XIX.

Preached June 27, 1852.

THE LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL USE OF LAW.

A FRAGMENT.

1 Tim. i. 8.—"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully"... 598

SERMON XX.

Preached February 21, 1853.

THE PRODIGAL AND HIS BROTHER.

Luke xv. 31, 32.—"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found". 603

SERMON XXI.

Preached May 15, 1853.

JOHN'S REBUKE OF HEROD.

Luke iii. 19, 20.—"But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison"........................... 614

Fourth Series.

SERMON I.

Preached January, 1848.

THE CHARACTER OF ELI.

1 Sam. iii. 1.—"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision"................. 62

SERMON II.

Preached March, 1848.

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST KING IN ISRAEL.

1 SAM. xii. 1.—"And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you"...Page 638

SERMON III.

PRAYER.

MATT. xxvi. 39.—"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"..... 644

SERMON IV.

Preached January 25, 1852.

PERVERSION, AS SHOWN IN BALAAM'S CHARACTER.

NUMB. xxii. 34, 35.—"And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak"............................. 651

SERMON V.

Preached February 1, 1852

SELFISHNESS, AS SHOWN IN BALAAM'S CHARACTER.

NUMB. xxiii. 10.—"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!".................. 657

SERMON VI.

Preached December 28, 1851.

THE TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE.

PSALM xc. 12.—"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"................... 663

SERMON VII.

Preached July 7, 1850.

VIEWS OF DEATH.

ECCLES. ii. 15, 16.—"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool".......Page 670

SERMON VIII.

Preached December 12, 1852.

WAITING FOR THE SECOND ADVENT.

2 THESS. iii. 5.—"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ"......... 674

SERMON IX.

Preached November 18, 1849.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST.

1 JOHN iii. 4, 5.—"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin"............................. 680

SERMON X.

Preached November 9, 1851.

CHRIST'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SIN.

MARK ii. 8-11.—"And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house"...... 690

SERMON XI.

Preached June 6, 1852.

REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 5-7.—"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"....... .. 697

SERMON XII.

Preached July 4, 1852.

AN ELECTION SERMON.

Acts i. 23–26.—"And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" ....Page 704

SERMON XIII.

Preached November 24, 1850.

ISAAC BLESSING HIS SONS.

Gen. xxvii. 1–4.—"And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die"........ 710

SERMON XIV.

Preached April, 1849.

SALVATION OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

Acts ix. 36.—"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did," etc.
Acts x. 1.—"There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band," etc......... 716

SERMON XV.

Preached 1849.

THE WORD AND THE WORLD.

Acts xix. 1, 2.—"And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," etc. 724

SERMON XVI.

Preached June 24, 1849

SOLOMON'S RESTORATION.

Neh. xiii. 26.—"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God"..Page 735

SERMON XVII.

Preached June 1, 1851.

JOSEPH'S FORGIVENESS OF HIS BRETHREN.

Gen. l. 15–21.—"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them".......................... 745

SERMON XVIII.

Preached November 15, 1849.

A THANKSGIVING DAY AFTER CHOLERA.

John v. 14, 15.—"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole"........................... 752

SERMON XIX.

Preached August 8, 1852.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP.

Mal. iii. 16.—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" . 761

SERMON XX.

Preached February 2, 1851.

RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST.

COLOSS. i. 21.—"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" .... Page 766

SERMON XXI.

Preached March 13, 1853.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHARITY.

1 PETER iv. 8. — "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" 776

SERMON XXII.

Preached January 8, 1849.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. 8, 9.—"And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" 787

SERMON XXIII.

Preached February 16, 1851.

THE ORPHANAGE OF MOSES.

A SERMON PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE ORPHAN SOCIETY.

EXOD. ii. 6–9.—"And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it" 794

SERMON XXIV.

Preached December, 1847.

CHRISTIANITY AND HINDOOISM.

AN ADVENT LECTURE.

DEUT. vi. 4, 5.—"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" .... Page 801

SERMON XXV.

Preached January 13, 1850.

REST.

MATT. xi. 28, 29.—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" 806

SERMON XXVI.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

A SERMON PREACHED ON ITS BEHALF.

MARK v. 35–43. — "While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat" 813

SERMON XXVII.

Preached December 1, 1850.

THREE TIMES IN A NATION'S HISTORY.

LUKE xix. 41–44.—"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" ....Page 818

SERMON XXVIII.

Preached December 8, 1850.

INSPIRATION.

Rom. xv. 1-4.—"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"............Page 825

SERMON XXIX.

Preached Good Friday. 1851.

THE LAST UTTERANCES OF CHRIST.

John xix. 30.—"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost"................ 832

SERMONS.

First Series.

I.

GOD'S REVELATION OF HEAVEN.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."—1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

The preaching of the Apostle Paul was rejected by numbers in the cultivated town of Corinth. It was not wise enough, nor eloquent enough:—nor was it sustained by miracles. The man of taste found it barbarous: the Jew missed the signs and wonders which he looked for in a new dispensation: and the rhetorician missed the convincing arguments of the schools. To all which the Apostle was content to reply, that his judges were incompetent to try the question. The princes of this world might judge in a matter of politics: the leaders in the world of literature were qualified to pronounce on a point of taste: the counsellors of this world to weigh an amount of evidence. But in matters spiritual, they were as unfit to judge, as a man without ea is to decide respecting harmony; or a man judging alone by sensation, to supersede the higher truth of science by an appeal to his own estimate of appearances. The world, to sense, seems stationary. To the eye of reason it moves with lightning speed, and the cultivation of reason alone can qualify for an opinion on the matter. The judgment of the senses is worth nothing in such matters. For every kind of truth a special capacity or preparation is indispensable.

For a revelation of spiritual facts two things are needed:—First, a Divine Truth; next, a spirit which can receive it.

Therefore the Apostle's whole defense resolved itself into this: The natural man receiveth not the things which are of the Spirit of God. The world by wisdom knew not God. And his vindication of his teaching was: These Revealed Truths can not be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, nor guessed by the heart; they are visible, audible, imaginable, only to the spirit. By the spiritually prepared, they are recognized as beautiful, though they be folly to all the world besides, as his Master had said before him, "Wisdom is justified by her children." In whatever type of life she might be exhibited, whether in the austere Man of the Desert, or in the higher type of the social life of Christ, the Children of Wisdom recognized her lineaments, justified and loved her—She was felt by *them.*

Two things are contained in this verse:—

I. The inability of the lower parts of human nature—the natural man—to apprehend the higher truths.

II. The nature and laws of Revelation.

I. By the natural man is meant the lower faculties of man; and it is said of these that they can not discover spiritual truth.

1. Eternal truth is not perceived through sensation. "Eye hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

There is a life of mere sensation. The degree of its enjoyment depends upon fineness of organization. The pleasures of sense arise from the vibration of a nerve, or the thrilling of a muscle—nothing higher.

The highest pleasure of sensation comes through the eye. She ranks above all the rest of the senses in dignity. He whose eye is so refined by discipline that he can repose with pleasure upon the serene outline of beautiful form, has reached the purest of the sensational raptures.

Now, the Corinthians could appreciate this. Theirs was the land of beauty. They read the Apostle's letter, surrounded by the purest conceptions of Art. In the orders of architecture, the most richly graceful of all columnar forms receives its name from Corinth. And yet it was to these men, living in the very midst of the chastely beautiful, upon whom the Apostle emphatically urged—"*Eye* hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Let us not depreciate what God has given. There is a rapture in gazing on this wondrous world. There is a joy in contemplating the manifold forms in which the All Beauful has concealed His essence—the Living Garment in which the Invisible has robed His mysterious loveliness. In every aspect of Nature there is joy; whether it be the purity of virgin morning, or the sombre gray of a day of clouds, or the solemn pomp and majesty of night; whether it be the chaste lines of the crystal, or the waving outline of distant hills, tremulously visible through dim vapors; the minute petals of the fringed daisy, or the overhanging form of mysterious forests. It is a pure delight *to see.*

But all this is bounded. The eye can only reach the finite Beautiful. It does not scan "the King in his beauty, nor the land that is very far off." The Kingdom, but not the King—something measured by inches, yards, and miles—not the land which is very far off in the Infinite.

Again, it is perishable beauty—a sight to sadden rather than delight. Even while you gaze, and feel how fair it is, joy mingles with melancholy, from a consciousness that it all is fading:—it is the transient—not the Eternal Loveliness for which our spirits pant.

Therefore, when He came into this world, who was the Truth and the Life, in the body which God had prepared for Him, He came not in the glory of form: He was "a root out of a dry ground: He had no form nor comeliness;" when they saw Him, "there was no beauty that they should desire Him." The eye did not behold, even in Christ, the things which God had prepared.

Now observe, this is an Eternal Truth; true at all times—true now and forever. In the quotation of this verse, a false impression is often evident. It is quoted as if the Apostle by "the things prepared" meant heaven, and the glories of a world which is to be visible hereafter, but is at present unseen. This is manifestly alien from his purpose. The world of which he speaks is not a future, but a present revelation. God *hath* revealed it. He speaks not of something to be manifested hereafter, but of something already shown, only not to eye nor ear. The distinction lies between a kingdom which is appreciable by the senses, and another whose facts and truths are seen and heard only by the spirit. Never yet hath the eye seen the Truths of God—but then never shall it see them. In heaven this shall be as true as now. Shape and color give them not. God will never be visible—nor will His blessedness. He has no form. The pure in heart will see Him, but never with the eye; only in the same way, but in a different degree, that they see Him now. In the anticipated vision of the Eternal, what do you expect to see? A shape? Hues? You will never behold God. Eye hath not seen, and never shall see in finite form, the Infinite One, nor the Infinite of feeling or of Truth.

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Again—no scientific analysis can discover the truths of God. Science can not give a Revelation. Science proceeds upon observation. It submits every thing to the experience of the senses. Its law, expounded by its great lawgiver, is, that if you would ascertain its truth you must see, feel, taste. Experiment is the test of truth. Now, you can not, by searching, find out the Almighty to perfection, nor a single one of the blessed Truths He has to communicate.

Men have tried to demonstrate Eternal Life from an examination of the structure of the body. One fancies he has discovered the seat of life in the pineal gland—another in the convolution of a nerve—and thence each infers the continuance of the mystic principle supposed to be discovered there. But a third comes, and sees in it all nothing really immaterial: organization, cerebration, but not Thought or Mind separable from these; nothing that must necessarily subsist after the organism has been destroyed.

Men have supposed they discovered the law of Deity written on the anatomical phenomena of disease. They have exhibited the brain inflamed by intoxication, and the structure obliterated by excess. They have shown in the disordered frame the inevitable penalty of transgression. But if a man, startled by all this, gives up this sin, has he from this selfish prudence learned the law of Duty? The penalties of wrong-doing, doubtless: but not the sanction of Right and Wrong written on the conscience, of which penalties are only the enforcements. He has indisputable evidence that it is expedient not to commit excesses; but you can not manufacture a conscience out of expediency: the voice of conscience says not, It is better not do so, but "Thou shalt not."

No: it is in vain that we ransack the world for probable evidences of God and hypotheses of his existence. It is idle to look into the materialism of man for the Revelation of his immortality; or to examine the morbid anatomy of the body to find the rule of Right. If a man go to the eternal world with convictions of Eternity, the Resurrection, God, already in his spirit, he will find abundant corroborations of that which he already believes. But if God's existence be not thrilling every fibre of his heart, if the Immortal be not already in him as the proof of the Resurrection, if the law of Duty be not stamped upon his soul as an Eternal Truth, unquestionable, a thing that must be obeyed, quite separately from all considerations of punishment or impunity, science will never reveal these—observation pries in vain—the physician comes away from the laboratory an infidel. Eye hath not seen the truths which are clear enough to Love and to the Spirit.

2. Eternal truth is not reached by hearsay—"Ear hath not heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

No revelation can be adequately given by the address of man to man, whether by writing or orally, even if he be put in possession of the Truth itself. For all such revelation must be made through words: and words are but counters—the coins of intellectual exchange. There is as little resemblance between the silver coin and the bread it purchases, as between the word and the thing it stands for. Looking at the coin, the form of the loaf does not suggest itself. Listening to the word, you do not perceive the idea for which it stands, unless you are already in possession of it. Speak of ice to an inhabitant of the torrid zone, the word does not give him an idea, or if it does it must be a false one. Talk of blueness to one who can not distinguish colors, what can your most eloquent description present to him resembling the truth of your sensation? Similarly in matters spiritual, no verbal revelation can give a single simple idea. For instance, what means justice to the unjust—or purity to the man whose heart is steeped in licentiousness? What does infinitude mean to a being who has never stirred from infancy beyond a cell, never seen the sky, or the sea, or any of those *occasions* of thought which, leaving vagueness on the mind, suggest the idea of the illimitable? It means, explain it as you will, nothing to him but a room: vastly larger than his own, but still a room, terminated by a wall. Talk of God to a thousand ears, each has his own different conception. Each man in this congregation has a God before him at this moment, who is, according to his own attainment in goodness, more or less limited and imperfect. The sensual man hears of God, and understands one thing. The pure man hears, and conceives another thing. Whether you speak in metaphysical or metaphorical language, in the purest words of inspiration, or the grossest images of materialism, the conceptions conveyed by the same word are essentially different, according to the soul which receives them.

So that apostles themselves, and prophets, speaking to the ear, can not reveal truth to the soul—no, not if God Himself were to touch their lips with fire. A verbal revelation is only a revelation to the ear.

Now see what a hearsay religion is. There are men who believe on authority. Their minister believes all this Chris tianity true: therefore so do they. He calls this doctrine essential: they echo it. Some thousands of years ago, men communed with God: they have heard this and are content it should be so. They have heard with the hearing of the ear, that God is love—that the ways of holiness are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. But a hearsay belief saves not. The Corinthian philosophers heard Paul, the Pharisees heard Christ. How much did the ear convey? To thousands exactly nothing. He alone believes truth who feels it. He alone has a religion whose soul knows by experience that to serve God and know Him is the richest treasure. And unless Truth come to you, not in word only, but in power besides—authoritative because true, not true because authoritative—there has been no real revelation made to you from God.

3. Truth is not discoverable by the heart—"neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

The heart—two things we refer to this source: the power of imagining, and the power of loving.

Imagination is distinct from the mere dry faculty of reasoning. Imagination is creative—it is an immediate intuition; not a logical analysis—we call it popularly a kind of inspiration. Now imagination is a power of the heart. Great thoughts originate from a large heart: a man must have a heart, or he never could create.

It is a grand thing, when in the stillness of the soul, thought bursts into flame, and the intuitive vision comes like an inspiration; when breathing thoughts clothe themselves in burning words, winged as it were with lightning; or when a great law of the universe reveals itself to the mind of Genius, and where all was darkness, his single word bids Light be, and all is order where chaos and confusion were before. Or when the truths of human nature shape themselves forth in the creative fancies of one like the myriad-minded poet, and you recognize the rare power of *heart* which sympathizes with, and can reproduce all that is found in man.

But all this is nothing more than what the material man can achieve. The most ethereal creations of fantastic fancy were shaped by a mind that could read the life of Christ, and then blaspheme the Adorable. The truest utterances, and some of the deepest ever spoken, revealing the unrest and the agony that lie hid in the heart of man, came from one whose life was from first to last selfish. The highest astronomer of this age, before whose clear eye Creation lay revealed in all its perfect order, was one whose spirit refused to recognize the Cause of causes. The mighty heart of Genius had failed to reach the things which God imparts to a humble spirit.

There is more in the heart of man—it has the power of affection. The highest moment known on earth by the merely natural, is that in which the mysterious union of heart with heart is felt. Call it friendship—love—what you will, that mystic blending of two souls in one, when self is lost and found again in the being of another, when, as it were, moving about in the darkness and loneliness of existence, we suddenly come in contact with something, and we find that spirit has touched spirit. This is the purest, serenest ecstasy of the merely human—more blessed than any sight that can be presented to the eye, or any sound that can be given to the ear: more sublime than the sublimest dream ever conceived by genius in its most gifted hour, when the freest way was given to the shaping spirit of imagination.

This has entered into the heart of man, yet this is of the lower still. It attains not to the things prepared by God, it dimly shadows them. Human love is but the faint type of that surpassing blessedness which belongs to those who love God.

II. We pass, therefore, to the nature and laws of Revelation.

First, Revelation is made by a Spirit to a spirit—"God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." Christ is the voice of God *without* the man—the Spirit is the voice of God *within* the man. The highest revelation is not made by Christ, but comes directly from the universal Mind to our minds Therefore, Christ said Himself, "He, the Spirit, shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." And therefore it is written here—"The *Spirit* searches all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Now the Spirit of God lies touching, as it were, the soul of man—ever around and near. On the outside of earth man stands with the boundless heaven above him: nothing between him and space—space around him and above him—the confines of the sky touching him. So is the spirit of man to the Spirit of the Ever Near. They mingle. In every man this is true. The spiritual in him, by which he might become a recipient of God, may be dulled, deadened by a life of sense, but in this world never lost. All men are not spiritual men, but all have spiritual sensibilities which might awake. All that is wanted is to become conscious of the nearness of God. God has placed men here to feel after Him if haply they may find Him, albeit *He be not far* from any one of them. Our souls float in the immeasurable ocean of Spirit. God lies around us: at any moment we might be conscious of the contact.

The *condition* upon which this self-revelation of the Spirit is made to man is love. These things are "prepared for them that love Him," or, which is the same thing, revealed to those who have the mind of Christ.

Let us look into this word love. Love to man may mean several things. It may mean love to his person, which is very different from himself, or it may mean simply pity. Love to God can only mean one thing: God is a Character. To love God is to love His character. For instance—God is Purity. And to be pure in thought and look; to turn away from unhallowed books and conversation, to abhor the moment in which we have not been pure, is to love God.

God is love—and to love men till private attachments have expanded into a philanthropy which embraces all—at last even the evil and enemies, with compassion—that is to love God. God is truth. To be true, to hate every form of falsehood, to live a brave, true, real life, that is to love God. God is Infinite; and to love the boundless, reaching on from grace to grace, adding charity to faith, and rising upward ever to see the Ideal still above us, and to die with it unattained, aiming insatiably to be perfect even as the Father is perfect, that is love to God.

This love is manifested in obedience; love is the life of which obedience is the form. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. . . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Now here can be no mistake. Nothing can be love to God which does not shape itself into obedience. We remember the anecdote of the Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against whose prohibition was his own son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then in triumphant feeling carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman father refused to recognize the instinct which prompted this as deserving of the name of love; disobedience contradicted it, and deserved death:—weak sentiment, what was it worth?

So with God: strong feelings, warm expressions, varied internal experience co-existing with disobedience, God counts not as love. Mere weak feeling may not usurp that sacred name.

To this love, adoring and obedient, God reveals His truth —for such as love it is prepared: or rather, by the well known Hebrew inversion, such are prepared for it. Love is the condition without which revelation does not take place. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world: By compliance with the laws of the universe, we put ourselves in possession of its blessings. Obey the laws of health, and you obtain health: temperance, sufficiency of light and air, and exercise, these are the conditions of health. Arm yourselves with the laws of nature, and you may call down the lightning from the sky: surround yourself with glass, and the lightning may play innocuously a few inches from you; it can not touch you; you may defy it; you have obeyed the conditions of nature, and nature is on your side against it.

In the same way, there are conditions in the world of Spirit, by compliance with which God's Spirit comes into the soul with all its revelations, as surely as lightning from the sky, and as invariably:—such conditions as these: "The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* Him." "No man hath seen God at any time." "If we *love* one another, God dwelleth in us." "With this man will I dwell, even with him that is of a *meek* and *contrite* spirit." "If any man will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine"—reverence, love, meekness, contrition, obedience—these conditions having taken place, God enters into the soul, whispers His secret, becomes visible, imparts knowledge and conviction.

Now these laws are universal and invariable. they are subject to no caprice. There is no favorite child of nature who may hold the fire-ball in the hollow of his hand and trifle with it without being burnt;—there is no selected child of grace who can live an irregular life without unrest; or be proud, and at the same time have peace; or indolent, and receive fresh inspiration; or remain unloving and cold, and yet see and hear and feel the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

Therefore the apostle preached the Cross to men who felt, and to men who felt not, the Revelation contained in it. The Cross is humbleness, love, self-surrender—these the apostle preached. To conquer the world by loving it—to be blest by ceasing the pursuit of happiness, and sacrificing life instead of finding it—to make a hard lot easy by submitting to it: this was his divine philosophy of life. And the princes of this world, amidst scoffs and laughter, replied, Is that all? Nothing to dazzle—nothing to captivate. But the disciples of the inward life recognized the Divine Truth which this doctrine of the Cross contained The humble of heart and the loving felt that in this lay the mystery of life, of themselves, and of God, all revealed and plain. It was God's own wisdom, felt by those who had the mind of Christ.

The application of all this is very easy: Love God, and He will dwell with you. Obey God, and He will reveal the truths of His deepest teaching to your soul. Not *perhaps*.—as surely as the laws of the spiritual world are irreversible, are these things prepared for obedient love. An inspiration as true, as real, and as certain as that which ever prophet or apostle reached, is yours, if you will have it so.

And if obedience were entire and love were perfect, then would the revelation of the Spirit to the soul of man be perfect too. There would be trust expelling care, and enabling a man to repose; there would be a love which would cast out fear; there would be a sympathy with the mighty All of God. Selfishness would pass, isolation would be felt no longer; the tide of the universal and eternal Life would come with mighty pulsations throbbing through the soul. To such a man it would not matter where he was, nor what: to live or die would be alike. If he lived, he would live unto the Lord; if he died, he would die to the Lord. The bed of down surrounded by friends, or the martyr's stake girt round with curses — what matter which? Stephen, dragged, hurried, driven to death, felt the glory of God streaming on his face: when the shades of faintness were gathering round his eyes, and the world was fading away into indistinctness, "the things prepared" were given him. His spirit saw what "eye had never seen." The later martyr bathes his fingers in the flames, and while the flesh shrivels and the bones are cindered, says, in unfeigned sincerity, that he is lying on a bed of roses. It would matter little what he was—the ruler of a kingdom, or a tailor grimed with the smoke and dust of a workshop. To a soul filled with God, the difference between these two is inappreciable—as if, from a distant star, you were to look down upon a palace and a hovel, both dwindled into distance, and were to smile at the thought of calling one large and the other small.

No matter to such a man what he saw or what he heard; for every sight would be resplendent with beauty, and every sound would echo harmony; things common would become transfigured, as when the ecstatic state of the inward soul reflected a radiant cloud from the form of Christ. The human would become divine, Life — even the meanest — noble. In the hue of every violet there would be a glimpse of Divine affection, and a dream of Heaven The forest would blaze with Deity, as it did to the eye of Moses. The creations of genius would breathe less of earth and more of Heaven. Human love itself would burn with a clearer and intenser flame, rising from the altar of self-sacrifice.

These are "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Compared with these, what are loveliness—the eloquent utterances of man—the conceptions of the heart of Genius? What are they all to the serene stillness of a spirit lost in love: the full deep rapture of a soul int which the Spirit of God is pouring itself in a mighty tide of Revelation?

II.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went int a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spak many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Wh hath ears to hear, let him hear."—Matt. xiii. 1–9.

Before the reception of the Lord's Supper on Sunday next, I have been anxious to address you once more, my young friends, in order to carry on the thoughts, and, if possible, deepen the impressions of Tuesday last. During the last few weeks you have been subjected to much that is exciting; and in proportion to the advantage is the danger of that excitement. A great part of the value of the rite of Confirmation consists in its being a season of excitement or impression. The value of excitement is, that it breaks up the old mechanical life which has become routine. It stirs the stagnancy of our existence, and causes the stream of life to flow more fresh and clear. The danger of excitement is the probability of reaction. The heart, like the body and the mind, can not be long exposed to extreme tension without giving way afterwards. Strong impressions are succeeded by corresponding listlessness. Your work, to which you have so long looked forward, is done. The profession has been made, and now left suddenly, as it were, with noth ing before you, and apparently no answer to the question, What are we to do now? Insensibly you will feel that all is over, and the void within your hearts will be inevitably filled, unless there be great vigilance, by a very different class of excitements. This danger will be incurred most by precisely those who felt most deeply the services of the past week.

The parable I have selected dwells upon such a class of dangers.

No one who felt, or even thought, could view the scene of Tuesday last without emotion. Six or seven hundred young persons solemnly pledged themselves to renounce evil in themselves and in the world, and to become disciples of the Cross. The very color of their garments, typical of purity, seemed to suggest the hope and the expectation that the day might come when they shall be found clothed with that inward righteousness of which their dress was but a symbol, when "they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy." As yet fresh in feeling, as yet untainted by open sin, who could see them without hoping that?

My young friends, experience forces us to correct that sanguine anticipation. Of the seven hundred who were earnest then, it were an appalling question to ask how many will have retained their earnestness six months hence, and how much of all that which seemed so real will be recognized as pure, true gold at the last Great Day. Soon some will have lost their innocence, and some will have become frivolous and artificial, and the world will have got its cold, deadening hand on some. Who shall dare to guess in how many the best raised hopes will be utterly disappointed?

Now the question which presents itself is, How comes so much promise to end in failure? And to this the parable of the sower returns a reply.

Three causes are conceivable: It might be the will, or, if you venture so to call it, the fault of Him who gave the truth; or it might be some inherent impotency in the truth itself; or, lastly, the fault might lie solely in the soil of the heart.

This parable assures us that the fault does not lie in God, the sower. God does not predestinate men to fail. That is strikingly told in the history of Judas—"From a ministry and apostleship Judas fell, that he might go to his own place." The ministry and apostleship were that to which God had destined him. To work out that was the destiny appointed to him, as truly as to any of the other apostles. He was called, elected to that. But when he refused to execute that mission, the very circumstances which, by God's decree, were leading him to blessedness, hurried him to ruin. Circumstances prepared by Eternal Love, became the destiny which conducted him to everlasting doom. He was a predestined man—crushed by his fate. But he went to his "*own* place." He had shaped his own destiny. So the ship is wrecked by the winds and waves—hurried to its fate. But the winds and waves were in truth its best friends. Rightly guided, it would have made use of them to reach the port; wrongly steered, they became the destiny which drove it on the rocks. Failure—the wreck of life—is not to be impiously traced to the will of God. "God will have all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth." God willeth not the death of a sinner.

Nor, again, can we find the cause in any impotency of truth:—an impotency, doubtless, there is somewhere. The old thinkers accounted for it by the depravity of Matter. God can do any thing, they said. Being good, God would do all good. If he do not, it is because of the materials He has to deal with. Matter thwarts Him: Spirit is pure, but Matter is essentially evil and unspiritual: the body is corrupt. Against this doctrine St. Paul argues in the text, "For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. v. 4.

The true account is this: God has created in man a will which has become a cause. "God can do any thing?" I know not that. God can not deny himself; God can not do wrong; God can not create a number less than one; God can not make a contradiction true. It is a contradiction to let man be free, and force him to do right. God has performed this marvel, of creating a being with free-will, independent, so to speak, of Himself—a real cause in His universe. To say that He has created such a one, is to say that He has given him the power to fail. Without free-will there could be no human goodness. It is wise, therefore, and good in God, to give birth to free-will. But once acknowledge free-will in man, and the origin of evil does not lie in God.

And this leads us to the remaining cause of failure which is conceivable. In our own free-will—in the grand and fearful power we have to ruin ourselves—lies the real and only religious solution of the mystery. In the soil of the heart is found all the nutriment of spiritual life, and all the nutriment of the weeds and poisons which destroy spiritual life. And it is this which makes Christian character, when complete, a thing so inestimably precious. There are things precious, not from the materials of which they are made, but from the risk and difficulty of bringing them to perfection. The speculum of the largest telescope foils the optician's skill in casting. Too much or too little heat—the interposition of a grain of sand, a slight alteration in the temperature of the weather, and all goes to pieces—it must be recast. Therefore, when successfully finished, it is a matter for almost the congratulation of a country. Rarer, and more difficult still than the costliest part of the most delicate of instruments, is the completion of Christian character. Only let there come the heat of persecution, or the cold of human desertion, a little of the world's dust, and the rare and costly thing is cracked, and becomes a failure.

In this parable are given to us the causes of failure, and the requirements which are necessary in order to enable impressions to become permanent.

I. The causes of failure.

1. The first of these is want of spiritual perception. Some of the seed fell by the way-side. There are persons whose religion is all outside; it never penetrates beyond the intellect. Duty is recognized in word, not felt. They are regular at church, understand the Catechism and Articles, consider the Church a most venerable institution, have a respect for religion, but it never stirs the deeps of their being. They feel nothing in it beyond a safeguard for the decencies and respectabilities of social life; valuable, as parliaments and magistrates are valuable, but by no means the one awful question which fills the soul with fearful grandeur.

Truth of life is subject to failure in such hearts in two ways:—By being trodden down: wheat dropped by a harvest-cart upon a road lies outside. There comes a passenger's foot, and crushes some of it; then wheels come by—the wheel of traffic and the wheel of pleasure—crushing it grain by grain. It is "trodden down."

The fate of religion is easily understood from the parallel fate of a single sermon. Scarcely has its last tone vibrated on the ear, when a fresh impression is given by the music which dismisses the congregation. That is succeeded by another impression, as your friend puts his arm in yours and talks of some other matter, irrelevant, obliterating any slight seriousness which the sermon produced. Another, and another, and another—and the word is *trodden down.* Observe, there is nothing wrong in these impressions. The farmer's cart which crushes the grain by the way-side is rolling by on rightful business, and the stage and the pedestrian are in their place; simply the seed is not. It is not the wrongness of the impressions which treads religion down, but only this, that outside religion yields in turn to other outside impressions which are stronger.

Again conceptions of religious life, which are only conceptions outward, having no lodgment in the heart, *disappear.* Fowls of the air came and devoured the seed. Have you ever seen grain scattered on the road? The sparrow from the housetop, and the chickens from the barn rush in, and within a minute after it has been scattered not the shadow of a grain is left. This is the picture, not of thought crushed by degrees, but of thought dissipated, and no man can tell when or how it went. Swiftly do these winged thoughts come, when we pray, or read, or listen; in our inattentive, sauntering, way-side hours: and before we can be upon our guard, the very trace of holier purposes has disappeared. In our purest moods when we kneel to pray, or gather round the altar, down into the very Holy of holies sweep these foul birds of the air, villain fancies, demon thoughts. The germ of life, the small seed of impression, is gone—where, you know not. But it is gone. Inattentiveness of spirit, produced by want of spiritual interest, is the first cause of disappointment.

2. A second cause of failure is want of depth in character Some fell on stony ground. Stony ground means often the soil with which many loose stones are intermixed; but that is not the stony ground meant here: this stony ground is the thin layer of earth upon a bed of rock. Shallow soil is like superficial character. You meet with such persons in life. There is nothing deep about them; all they do and all they have is on the surface. The superficial servant's work is done, but lazily, partially—not thoroughly. The superficial workman's labor will not bear looking into—but it bears a showy outside. The very dress of such persons betrays the slatternly, incomplete character of their minds. When religion comes in contact with persons of this stamp, it shares the fate of every thing else. It is taken up in a superficial way.

There is deep knowledge of human nature and exquisite fidelity to truth in the single touch by which the impression of religion on them is described. The seed sprang up quickly, and then withered away as quickly, because it had no depth of root. There is a quick, easily-moved susceptibility that rapidly exhibits the slightest breath of those emotions which play upon the surface of the soul, and then as rapidly passes off. In such persons words are ever at command—voluble and impassioned words. Tears flow readily. The expressive features exhibit every passing shade of thought. Every thought and every feeling plays upon the surface ; every thing that is sown springs up at once with vehement vegetation. But slightness and inconstancy go together with violence. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." True ; but also out of the emptiness of the heart the mouth can speak even more volubly. He who can always find the word which is appropriate and adequate to his emotions is not the man whose emotions are deepest: warmth of feeling is one thing, permanence is another. On Tuesday last, they who went to the table most moved and touched were not necessarily those who raised in a wise observer's breast the strongest hope of persistence in the life of Christ. Rather those who were calm and subdued: that which springs up quickly often does so merely from this, that it has no depth of earth to give it room to strike its roots down and deep.

A young man of this stamp came to Christ, running, kneeling, full of warm expressions, engaging gestures, and professed admiration, worshipping and saying, "Good Master!" Lovable and interesting as such always are, Jesus loved him. But his religion lay all upon the surface, withered away when the depth of its meaning was explored. The test of self-sacrifice was applied to his apparent love. He was ready for any thing. Well, "Go, sell that thou hast," "and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." It had sprung up quickly; but it withered because it had no root.

And that is another stroke of truth in the delineation of this character. Not wealth nor comfort is the bane of its religion; but "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by they are offended." A pleasant, sunny religion would be the life to suit them. "They receive the word with joy." So long as they have happiness they can love God, feel very grateful, and expand with generous emotions. But when God speaks as he spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and the sun is swept from the face of their heaven, and the sharp Cross is the only object left in the dreary landscape, and the world blames, and friends wound the wounded with cold speech and hollow commonplaces, what is there in superficial religion to keep the heart in its place, and vigorous still?

Another point. Not without significance is it represented that the superficial character is connected with the hard heart. Beneath the light thin surface of easily-stirred dust lies the bed of rock. The shallow ground was stony ground. And it is among the children of light enjoyment and unsettled life that we must look for stony heartlessness: not in the world of business—not among the poor, crushed to the earth by privation and suffering. These harden the character, but often leave the heart soft. If you wish to know what hollowness and heartlessness are, you must seek for them in the world of light, elegant, superficial fashion—where frivolity has turned the heart into a rockbed of selfishness. Say what men will of the heartlessness of trade, it is nothing compared with the heartlessness of fashion. Say what they will of the atheism of science, it is nothing to the atheism of that round of pleasure in which many a heart lives: dead while it lives.

3. Once more, impressions come to nothing when the mind is subjected to dissipating influences, and yields to them. "Some fell among thorns."

There is nutriment enough in the ground for thorns, and enough for wheat; but not enough, in any ground, for both wheat and thorns. The agriculturist thins his nursery-ground, and the farmer weeds his field, and the gardener removes the superfluous grapes for that very reason, in order that the dissipated sap may be concentrated in a few plants vigorously.

So in the same way the heart has a certain power of loving. But love, dissipated on many objects, concentrates itself on none. God *or* the world—not both. "No man can serve two masters." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He that has learned many accomplishments or sciences, generally knows none thoroughly. Multifariousness of knowledge is commonly opposed to depth, variety of affections is generally not found with intensity.

Two classes of dissipating influences distract such minds. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word." The *cares* of this world—its petty trifling distractions—not wrong in themselves—simply dissipating—filling the heart with paltry solicitudes and mean anxieties—*wearing*. Martha was "cumbered with much serving." Her household and her domestic duties, real duties, divided her heart with Christ. The time of danger, therefore, is when life expands into new situations and larger spheres, bringing with them new cares. It is not in the earlier stages of existence that these *distractions* are felt. Thorns sprang up and choked the wheat as they grew together. You see a religious man taking up a new pursuit with eagerness. At first no danger is suspected. But it is a *distraction*—

something that distracts or divides; he has become dissipated, and by-and-by you remark that his zest is gone; he is no longer the man he was. He talks as before, but the life is gone from what he says: his energies are frittered. The word is "choked."

Again, the deceitfulness of riches dissipate. True as always to nature, never exaggerating, never one-sided: Christ does not say that such religion brings forth no fruit, but only that it brings none to perfection. A fanatic bans all wealth and all worldly care as the department of the devil: Christ says, "How hardly shall they that *trust* in riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." He does not say the divided heart has no religion, but that it is a dwarfed, stunted, feeble religion. Many such a Christian do you find among the rich and the titled, who, as a less encumbered man, might have been a resolute soldier of the Cross; but he is only now a realization of the old Pagan fable—a spiritual giant buried under a mountain of gold. Oh! many, many such we meet in our higher classes, pining with a nameless want, pressed by a heavy sense of the weariness of existence, strengthless in the midst of affluence, and incapable even of tasting the profusion of comfort which is heaped around them.

There is a way God their Father has of dealing with such which is no pleasant thing to bear. In agriculture it is called *weeding.* In gardening it is done by *pruning.* It is the cutting off the over-luxuriant shoots, in order to call back the wandering juices into the healthier and more living parts. In religion it is described thus: "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth." . . . . Lot had such a danger, and was subjected to such a treatment. A quarrel had arisen between Abraham's herdsmen and his. It was necessary to part. Abraham, in that noble way of his, gave him the choice of the country when they separated. Either hand for Abraham—either the right hand or the left:—what cared the Pilgrim of the Invisible for fertile lands or rugged sands? Lot chose wisely, as they of the world speak. Well, if this world be all—he got a rich soil—became a prince, had kings for his society and neighbors. It was nothing to Lot that "the men of the land were sinners before the Lord exceedingly"—enough that it was well-watered everywhere. But his wife became enervated by voluptuousness, and his children tainted with ineradicable corruption—the moral miasma of the society wherein he had made his home. Two warnings God gave him: first, his home and property were spoiled by the enemy; then came the fire from heaven; and he fled from the cities of the plain a ruined man. His wife looked back with lingering regret upon the splendid home of her luxury and voluptuousness, and was overwhelmed in the encrusting salt: his children carried with them into a new world the plague-spot of that profligacy which had been the child of affluence and idleness; and the spirit of that rain of fire—of the buried Cities of the Plain—rose again in the darkest of the crimes which the Old Testament records, to poison the new society at its very fountain. And so the old man stood at last upon the brink of the grave, a blackened ruin scathed by lightning, over the grave of his wife, and the shame of his family—saved, but only "so as by fire."

It is a painful thing, that weeding work. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." The keen edge of God's pruning-knife cuts sheer through. No weak tenderness stops Him whose love seeks goodness, not comfort, for His servants. A man's distractions are in his wealth—and perhaps fire or failure make him bankrupt: what he feels is God's sharp knife. Pleasure has dissipated his heart, and a stricken frame forbids his enjoying pleasure—shattered nerves and broken health wear out the Life of life. Or perhaps it comes in a sharper, sadder form; the shaft of death goes home; there is heard the wail of danger in his household. And then, when sickness has passed on to hopelessness, and hopelessness has passed on to death, the crushed man goes into the chamber of the dead; and there, when he shuts down the lid upon the coffin of his wife, or the coffin of his child, his heart begins to tell him the meaning of all this. Thorns had been growing in his heart, and the sharp knife has been at work making room—but by an awful desolation—tearing up and cutting down, that the life of God in the soul may not be choked.

II. For the permanence of religious impressions this parable suggests three requirements: "They on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

1. "An honest and good heart." Earnestness: that is, sincerity of purpose. Now, sincerity is reckoned by an exaggeration, sometimes, the only virtue. So that a man be sincere, they say, it matters little what he thinks or what he is; but in truth is the basis of all goodness; without which goodness of any kind is impossible. There are faults more heinous, but none more ruinous, than insincerity. Subtle

minds, which have no broad, firm footing in reality, lose every thing by degrees, and may be transformed into any shape of evil; may become guilty of any thing, and excuse it to themselves. To this sincerity is given, in the parable, success: a harvest thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold.

This earnestness is the first requisite for real success in every thing. Do you wish to become rich? You may become rich: that is, if you desire it in no half-way, but thoroughly. A miser sacrifices all to this single passion; hoards farthings, and dies possessed of wealth. Do you wish to master any science or accomplishment? Give yourself to it, and it lies beneath your feet. Time and pains will do any thing. This world is given as the prize for the men in earnest; and that which is true of this world is truer still of the world to come. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Only there is this difference: In the pursuit of wealth, knowledge, or reputation, circumstances have power to mar the wisest schemes. The hoard of years may be lost in a single night. The wisdom hived up by a whole life may perish when some fever impairs memory. But in the kingdom of Christ, where inward *character* is the prize, no chance can rob earnestness of its exactly proportioned due of success. "*Whatsoever* a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no blight, nor mildew, nor scorching sun, nor rain-deluge, which can turn that harvest into a failure. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." . . . . Sow for time, and *probably* you will succeed in time. Sow the seeds of life—humbleness, pure-heartedness, love; and in the long eternity which lies before the soul, every minutest grain will come up again with an increase of thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold.

2. Meditation is a second requisite for permanence. They *keep* the word which they have heard.

Now, meditation is often confounded with something which only partially resembles it. Sometimes we sit in a kind of day-dream, the mind expatiating far away into vacancy, whilst minutes and hours slip by, almost unmarked, in mere vacuity. This is not meditation, but reverie—a state to which the soul resigns itself in pure passivity. When the soul is absent and dreaming, let no man think that *that* is spiritual meditation, or any thing that is spiritual.

Meditation is partly a passive, partly an active state. Whoever has pondered long over a plan which he is anxious to accomplish, without distinctly seeing at first the way, knows what meditation is. The subject itself presents itself in leisure moments spontaneously: but then all this sets the mind at work--contriving, imagining, rejecting, modifying It is in this way that one of the greatest of English engineers, a man uncouth and unaccustomed to regular discipline of mind, is said to have accomplished his most marvellous triumphs. He threw bridges over almost impracticable torrents, and pierced the eternal mountains for his viaducts Sometimes a difficulty brought all the work to a pause: then he would shut himself up in his room, eat nothing, speak to no one, abandon himself intensely to the contemplation of that on which his heart was set; and at the end of two or three days, would come forth serene and calm, walk to the spot, and quietly give orders which seemed the result of superhuman intuition. This was meditation.

Again, he knows what it is, who has ever earnestly and sincerely loved one living human being. The image of his friend rises unbidden by day and night, stands before his soul in the street and in the field, comes athwart his every thought, and mixes its presence with his every plan. So far all is passive. But besides this he plans and contrives for that other's happiness, tries to devise what would give pleasure, examines his own conduct and conversation, to avoid that which can by any possibility give pain. This is meditation.

So, too, is meditation on religious truths carried on. If it first be loved, it will recur spontaneously to the heart.

But then it is dwelt on till it receives innumerable applications—is again and again brought up to the sun and tried in various lights, and so incorporates itself with the realities of practical existence.

Meditation is done in silence. By it we renounce our narrow individuality, and expatiate into that which is infinite Only in the sacredness of inward silence does the soul truly meet the secret, hiding God. The strength of resolve, which afterwards shapes life and mixes itself with action, is the fruit of those sacred, solitary moments. There is a divine depth in silence. We meet God alone.

For this reason, I urged it upon so many of you to spend the hour previous to your Confirmation separate from friends, from books, from every thing human, and to force yourselves into the Awful Presence.

Have we never felt how human presence, if frivolous, in such moments frivolizes the soul, and how impossible it is to come in contact with any thoughts which are sublime, or drink in one inspiration which is from Heaven, without degrading it, even though surrounded by all that would naturally suggest tender and awful feeling, when such are by?

It is not the number of books you read, nor the variety of sermons which you hear, nor the amount of religious conversation in which you mix; but it is the frequency and the earnestness with which you meditate on these things, till the truth which may be in them becomes your own, and part of your own being, that insures your spiritual growth.

3. The third requisite is endurance. "They bring forth fruit with patience." Patience is of two kinds. There is an active, and there is a passive endurance. The former is a masculine, the latter for the most part a feminine virtue. Female patience is exhibited chiefly in fortitude—in bearing pain and sorrow meekly without complaining. In the old Hebrew life, female endurance shines almost as brightly as in any life which Christianity itself can mould. Hannah, under the provocations and taunts of her rival, answering not again her husband's rebuke, humbly replying to Eli's unjust blame, is true to the type of womanly endurance. For the type of man's endurance you may look to the patience of the early Christians under persecution. They came away from the Sanhedrim to endure and bear; but it was to bear as conquerors rushing on to victory, preaching the truth with all boldness, and defying the power of the united world to silence them. These two diverse qualities are joined in One, and only One of woman born, in perfection. One there was in whom human nature was exhibited in all its elements symmetrically complete. One in whom, as I lately said, there met all that was manliest and all that was most womanly. His endurance of pain and grief was that of the woman rather than the man. A tender spirit dissolving into tears, meeting the dark hour not with the stern defiance of the man and the stoic, but with gentleness, and trust, and love, and shrinking, like a woman. But when it came to the question in Pilate's judgment-hall, or the mockeries of Herod's men of war, or the discussion with the Pharisees, or the exposure of the hollow falsehoods by which social, domestic, and religious life were sapped, the woman has disappeared, and the hardy resolution of the man, with more than manly daring, is found in her stead. This is the "patience" for us to cultivate: To bear and to persevere. However dark and profitless, however painful and weary existence may have become, however any man like Elijah may be tempted to cast himself beneath the juniper-tree and say, "It is enough: now, O Lord!" life is not done, and our Christian character is not won, so long as God has any thing left for us to suffer, or any thing left for us to do.

Patience, however, has another meaning. It is the opposite of that impatience which can not *wait*. This is one of the difficulties of spiritual life. We are disappointed if the harvest do not come at once.

Last Tuesday, doubtless, you thought that all was done, and that there would be no more falling back.

Alas! a little experience will correct that. If the husbandman, disappointed at the delay which ensues before the blade breaks the soil, were to rake away the earth to examine if germination were going on, he would have a poor harvest. He must have "long patience, till he receive the early and the latter rain." The winter frost must mellow the seed lying in the genial bosom of the earth: the rains of spring must swell it, and the suns of summer mature it. So with you. It is the work of a long life to become a Christian. Many, oh, many a time are we tempted to say, "I make no progress at all. It is only failure after failure. Nothing grows." Now look at the sea when the flood is coming in. Go and stand by the sea-beach, and you will think that the ceaseless flux and reflux is but retrogression equal to the advance. But look again in an hour's time, and the whole ocean has advanced. Every advance has been beyond the last, and every retrograde movement has been an imperceptible trifle less than the last. This is progress: to be estimated at the end of hours, not minutes. And this is *Christian* progress. Many a fluctuation—many a backward motion with a rush at times so vehement that all seems lost; but if the eternal work be real, every failure has been a real gain, and the next does not carry us so far back as we were before. Every advance is a real gain, and part of it is never lost. Both when we advance and when we fail, we gain. We are nearer to God than we were. The flood of spirit-life has carried us up higher on the everlasting shores, where the waves of life beat no more, and its fluctuations end, and all is safe at last. "This is the faith and patience of the saints."

It is because of the second of these requirements, meditation, that I am anxious we should meet on Sunday next for an early Communion at eight o'clock. I desire that the candidates may have a more solemn and definite Communion of their own, with few others present except their own relations and friends. In silence and quietness, we will meet together then. Before the world has put on its full robe of light, and before the busy gay crowd have begun to throng our streets—before the distractions of the day begin, we will consecrate the early freshness of our souls—untrodden, unhardened, undissipated—to God. We will meet in the simplicity of brotherhood and sisterhood. We will have Communion in a sacred meal, which shall exhibit as nearly as may be the idea of family affection. Ye that are beginning life, and we who know something of it—ye that offer yourselves for the first time at that table, and we who, after sad experience and repeated failure, still desire again to renew our aspirations and our vows to Him—we will come and breathe together that prayer which I commended to you at your Confirmation—"Our Father, which art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

III.

JACOB'S WRESTLING.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."—Gen. xxxii. 28, 29.

The complexion of this story is peculiarly Jewish. It contains three points which are specially interesting to every Jew in a national point of view. It explained to him why he was called Israelite. It traces the origin of his own name, Israelite, to a distant ancestor, who had signally exhibited religious strength, and been, in the language of those times, a wrestler with God, from whence he had obtained the name Israel. It casts much deep and curious interest round an otherwise insignificant village, Peniel, where this transaction had taken place, and which derived its name from it, Peniel, the face of God. And, besides, it explained the origin of a singular custom, which might seem a superstitious one, of not suffering a particular muscle to be eaten, and regarding it with a kind of religious awe, as the part in which Jacob was said by tradition to have been injured, by the earnest tension of his frame during this struggle. So far all is Jewish, narrow, merely of local interest. Besides this, much of the story is evidently mythical.

It is clear at once that it belongs to that earlier period of literature when traditions were preserved in a poetical shape, adapted to the rude conceptions of the day, but enshrining an inner and a deeper truth. To disengage this truth from the form in which it is encased is the duty of the expositor.

Now, putting aside the form of this narrative, and looking into the heart and meaning of it, it will become apparent that we have no longer any thing infantine, or Jewish, or of limited interest, but a wide truth, wide as human nature; and that there is before us the record of an inward spiritual struggle, as real now in the nineteenth century as then: as real in every earnest man as it was in the history of Jacob.

We take these points:

I. The nameless secret of existence.
II. The revelation of that secret to the soul.

The circumstances which preceded this event were these: more than twenty years before, Jacob had been guilty of a deliberate sin. He had deceived his father; he had overreached his free-spirited, impetuous, open-hearted brother Esau. Never, during all those twenty years, had he seen the man whom he had injured. But now, on the point of returning to his native country, news was brought to him of his brother's approach, which made a meeting inevitable. Jacob made all his dispositions and arrangements to prepare for the worst. He sent over the brook Jabbok first the part of his family whom he valued least, and who would be the first to meet Esau; then those whom he loved most, that, in the event of danger, they might have the greatest facility in escaping; then Jacob was left alone, in the still dark night. It was one of those moments in existence when a crisis is before us, to which great and pregnant issues are linked—when all has been done that foresight can devise, and the hour of action being past, the instant of reaction has come. Then the soul is left passive and helpless, gazing face to face upon the anticipated and dreadful moment which is slowly moving on. It is in these hours that, having gone through in imagination the whole circle of resources and found them nothing, and ourselves powerless, as in the hands of a Destiny, there comes a strange and nameless dread, a horrible feeling of insecurity, which gives the consciousness of a want, and forces us to feel out into the abyss for something that is mightier than flesh and blood to lean upon.

Then, therefore, it was that there came the moment of a conflict within the soul of Jacob, so terrible and so violent that it seemed an actual struggle with a living man. In the darkness he had heard a voice, and came in contact with a Form, and felt a Presence, the reality of which there was no mistaking. Now, to the unscientific mind, that which is real seems to be necessarily material too. What wonder if, to the unscientific mind of Jacob, this conflict, so real, and attended in his person with such tangible results seemed all human and material—a conflict with a tangible antagonist? What wonder if tradition preserved it in such a form? Suppose we admit that the Being whose awful presence Jacob felt had no form which could be grappled by a human hand, is it less real for that? Are there no realities but those which the hand can touch and the eye see?

Jacob in that hour felt the dark secret and mystery of existence.

Upon this I shall make three remarks.

1. The first has reference to the contrast observable between this and a former revelation made to Jacob's soul. This was not the first time it had found itself face to face with God. Twenty years before, he had seen in vision a ladder reared against the sky, and angels ascending and descending on it. Exceedingly remarkable. Immediately after his transgression, when leaving his father's home, a banished man, to be a wanderer for many years, this first meeting took place. Fresh from his sin, God met him in tenderness and forgiveness. He saw the token which told him that all communication between heaven and earth was not severed. The way was clear and unimpeded still. Messages of reciprocated love might pass between the Father and His sinful child, as the angels in the dream ascended and descended on the visionary ladder. The possibility of saintliness was not forfeited. All *that* the vision taught him. Then took place that touching covenant, in which Jacob bound himself to serve gratefully his father's God, and vowed the vow of a consecrated heart to Him. All that was now past. After twenty years God met him again; but this second intercourse was of a very different character. It was no longer God the Forgiver, God the Protector, God the covenanting Love, that met Jacob; but God the Awful, the Unnamable, whose breath blasts, at whose touch the flesh of the mortal shrinks and shrivels up. This is exactly the reverse of what might have been anticipated. You would have expected the darker vision of experience to come first. First the storm-struggle of the soul; then the vision of peace. It was exactly the reverse.

Yet all this, tried by experience, is a most true and living account. The awful feelings about Life and God are *not* those which characterize our earlier years. It is quite natural that in the first espousals of the soul in its freshness to God, bright and hopeful feelings should be the predominant or the only ones. Joy marks, and ought to mark, early religion. Nay, by God's merciful arrangement, even sin is not that crushing thing in early life which it sometimes becomes in later years, when we mourn not so much a calculable number of sinful acts, as a deep pervading sinfulness. Remorse does not corrode with its evil power then. Forgiveness is not only granted, but consciously and joyfully felt. It is as life matures, that the weight of life, the burden of this unintelligible world, and the mystery of the hidden God, are felt.

A vast amount of insincerity is produced by mistaking this. We expect in the religion of the child the experience which can only be true in the religion of the man. We force into their lips the language which describes the wrestling of the soul with God. It is twenty years too soon. God, in His awfulness, the thought of mystery which scathes the soul, how can they know *that* yet before they have got the thews and sinews of the man's heart to master such a thought? They know nothing yet—they *ought* to know nothing yet of God but as the Father who is around their beds—they *ought* to see nothing yet but Heaven, and angels ascending and descending.

This morning, my young brethren, you presented yourselves at the communion-table for the first time. Some of you, we trust, were conscious of meeting God. Only let us not confound the dates of Christian experience. If you did, it was not as Jacob met God on this occasion, but rather as he met Him on the earlier one. It were only a miserable forcing of insincerity upon you to require that this solemn, fearful sensation of his should be yours. Rather, we trust, you felt God present as the Lord of Love. A ladder was raised for you to heaven. Oh, we trust that the feeling in some cases at least was this—as of angels ascending and descending upon a child of God.

2. Again I remark, that the end and aim of Jacob's struggle was to know the name of God. "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." A very unimportant desire at first sight. For what signifies a name? In these days, when names are only epithets, it signifies nothing. "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord," as the "Universal Prayer" insinuates, are all the same. Now, to assert that it matters not whether God be called Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, is true, if it mean this, that a devout and earnest heart is accepted by God, let the name be what it will by which He is addressed. But if it mean that Jove and Jehovah express the same Being—that the character of Him whom the Pagan worshipped was the same as the character of Him whom Israel adored under the name of Jehovah—that they refer to the same group of ideas, or that *always* names are but names, then we must look much deeper.

In the Hebrew history are discernible three periods distinctly marked, in which names and words bore very different characters. These three, it has been observed by acute philologists, correspond to the periods in which the nation bore the three different appellations of Hebrews, Israelites, Jews.

In the first of these periods names meant truths, and words were the symbols of realities. The characteristics of the names given then were simplicity and sincerity. They were drawn from a few simple sources: either from some characteristic of the individual, as Jacob, *The Supplanter*, or Moses, *Drawn from the Water;* or from the idea of family, as Benjamin, *The Son of my Right Hand;* or from the conception of the tribe or nation, then gradually consolidating itself; or, lastly, from the religious idea of God. But in this case not the highest notion of God—not Jah or Jehovah, but simply the earlier and simpler idea of Deity: El—Israel, *The Prince of El;* Peniel, *The Face of El.*

In these days names were real, but the conceptions they contained were not the loftiest.

The second period begins about the time of the departure from Egypt, and it is characterized by unabated simplicity, with the addition of sublimer thought and feeling more intensely religious. The heart of the nation was big with mighty and new religious truth—and the feelings with which the national heart was swelling found vent in the names which were given abundantly. God, under His name Jah, the noblest assemblage of spiritual truths yet conceived, became the adjunct to names of places and persons. Oshea's name is changed into Je-hoshua.

Observe, moreover, that in this period there was no fastidious, over-refined chariness in the use of that name. Men conscious of deep and real reverence are not fearful of the appearance of irreverence. The word became a common word, as it always may, so long as it is *felt*, and awe is *real.* A mighty cedar was called a cedar of Jehovah, a lofty mountain, a mountain of Jehovah. Human beauty even was praised by such an epithet. Moses was divinely fair, beautiful to God. The Eternal name became an adjunct. No beauty—no greatness—no goodness, was conceivable, except as emanating from Him: therefore His name was freely but most devoutly used.

Like the earlier period, in this too, words mean realities; but, unlike the earlier period, they are impregnated with deeper religious thought.

The third period was at its zenith in the time of Christ words had lost their meaning, and shared the hollow, unreal state of all things. A man's name might be Judas, and still he might be a traitor. A man might be called Pharisee—exclusively religious—and yet the name might only cover the hollowness of hypocrisy; or he might be called most noble Festus, and be the meanest tyrant that ever sat upon a proconsular chair. This is the period in which every keen and wise observer knows that the decay of national religious feeling has begun. That decay in the meaning of words, that lowering of the standard of the ideas for which they stand, is a certain mark of this. The debasement of a language is a sure mark of the debasement of a nation. The insincerity of a language is a proof of the insincerity of a nation: for a time comes in the history of a nation when words no longer stand for things; when names are given for the sake of an euphonious sound; and when titles are but the epithets of unmeaning courtesy:—a time when Majesty—Defender of the Faith—Most Noble—Worshipful, and Honorable—not only mean nothing, but do not flush the cheek with the shame of convicted falsehood when they are worn as empty ornaments.

The name of God shares this fate. A nation may reach the state in which the Eternal Name can be used to point a sentence, or adorn a familiar conversation, and no longer shock the ear with the sound of blasphemy, because in good truth the name no longer stands for the highest, but for a meaner conception, an idol of the debased mind. For example, in a foreign language, the language of a light and irreligious people, the Eternal Name can be used as a light expletive and conversational ejaculation, and not shock any religious sensibility. You could not do that in English. It would sound like a blasphemy to say, in light talk, My God! or Good God! Your flesh would creep at hearing it. But in that language the word has lost its sacredness, because it has lost its meaning. It means no more than Jove or Baal. It means a being whose existence has become a nursery fable. No marvel that we are taught to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name." We can not pray a deeper prayer for our country than to say, Never may that name in English stand for a lower idea than it stands for now. There is a solemn power in words, because words are the expression of character. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Yet in this period, exactly in proportion as the solemnity of the idea was gone, reverence was scrupulously paid to the corpse-like word which remained and had once inclosed it

In that hollow, artificial age, the Jew would wipe his pen before he ventured to write the name—he would leave out the vowels of the sacred Jehovah, and substitute those of the less sacred Elohim. In that kind of age, too, men bow to the name of Jesus often just in that proportion in which they have ceased to recognize His true grandeur and majesty of character.

In such an age it would be indeed preposterous to spend the strength upon an inquiry such as this: "Tell me Thy Name?" Jehovah, Jove, or Lord—what matter? But Jacob did not live in this third period, when names meant nothing, nor did he live in the second, when words contained the deepest truth the nation is ever destined to receive. But he lived in the first age, when men are sincere, and truthful, and earnest, and names exhibit character. To tell Jacob the name of God was to reveal to him what God is and who.

3. I observe a third thing. This desire of Jacob was not the one we should naturally have expected on such an occasion. He is alone—his past fault is coming retributively on a guilty conscience—he dreads the meeting with his brother. His soul is agonized with *that*, and *that* we naturally expect will be the subject and the burden of his prayer. No such thing! Not a word about Esau—not a word about personal danger at all. All that is banished completely for the time, and deeper thoughts are grappling with his soul. To get safe through to-morrow? No, no, no! To be blessed by God—to know Him, and what He is—that is the battle of Jacob's soul from sunset till the dawn of day.

And this is our struggle—*the* struggle. Let any true man go down into the deeps of his own being, and answer us—what is the cry that comes from the most real part of his nature? Is it the cry for daily bread? Jacob asked for that in his *first* communing with God—preservation, safety. Is it even this—to be forgiven our sins? Jacob had a sin to be forgiven, and in that most solemn moment of his existence he did not say a syllable about it. Or is it this—"Hallowed be thy name?" No, my brethren. Out of our frail and yet sublime humanity, the demand that rises in the earthlier hours of our religion may be this—Save my soul; but in the most unearthly moments it is this—"Tell me thy Name." We move through a world of mystery; and the deepest question is, What is the being that is ever near, sometimes felt, never seen—That which has haunted us from childhood with a dream of something surpassingly fair, which has never yet been realized—That which sweeps through the soul at times as a desolation, like the blast from the wings of the Angel of Death, leaving us stricken and silent in our loneliness—That which has touched us in our tenderest point, and the flesh has quivered with agony, and our mortal affections have shrivelled up with pain—That which comes to us in aspirations of nobleness, and conceptions of superhuman excellence? Shall we say It or He? What is It? Who is He? Those anticipations of Immortality and God—what are they? Are they the mere throbbings of my own heart, heard and mistaken for a living something beside me? Are they the sound of my own wishes, echoing through the vast void of nothingness? or shall I call them God, Father, Spirit, Love? A living Being within me or outside me? Tell me Thy Name, thou awful mystery of Loveliness! This is the struggle of all earnest life.

We come now to—

II. The revelation of the mystery.

1. It was revealed by awe. Very significantly are we told, that the Divine antagonist seemed, as it were, anxious to depart as the day was about to dawn, and that Jacob held Him more convulsively fast, as if aware that the daylight was likely to rob him of his anticipated blessing, in which there seems concealed a very deep truth. God is approached more nearly in that which is indefinite than in that which is definite and distinct. He is felt in awe, and wonder, and worship, rather than in clear conceptions. There is a sense in which darkness has more of God than light has. He dwells in the thick darkness. Moments of tender, vague mystery often bring distinctly the feeling of His presence. When day breaks and distinctness comes, the Divine has evaporated from the soul like morning dew. In sorrow, haunted by uncertain presentiments, we feel the Infinite around us. The gloom disperses, the world's joy comes again, and it seems as if God were gone—the Being who had touched us with a withering hand, and wrestled with us, yet whose presence, even when most terrible, was more blessed than His absence. It is true, even literally, that the darkness reveals God. Every morning God draws the curtain of the garish light across His eternity, and we lose the Infinite. We look down on earth instead of up to heaven, on a narrower and more contracted spectacle—that which is examined by the microscope when the telescope is laid aside—smallness, instead of vastness. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor till the evening;" and in the dust and pettiness of life we seem to cease to behold

Him: then at night He undraws the curtain again, and we see how much of God and eternity the bright distinct day has hidden from us. Yes, in solitary, silent, vague darkness, the Awful One is near.

This morning, young brethren, we endeavored to act on this belief; we met in stillness, before the full broad glare of day had rested on our world. Your first Communion implored His blessing in the earlier hour which seems so peculiarly His. Before the dull, and deadening, and earthward influences of the world had dried up the dew of fresh morning feeling, you tried to fortify your souls with a sense of His presence. This night, before to-morrow's light shall dawn, pray that He will not depart until He has left upon your hearts the blessing of a strength which shall be yours through the garish day, and through dry, scorching life, even to the close of your days.

2. Again, this revelation was made in an unsyllabled blessing. Jacob requested two things. He asked for a blessing and he prayed to know the name of God. God gave him the blessing. "He blessed him there," but refused to tell His name. "Wherefore dost thou ask after my name?"

In this, too, seems to lie a most important truth. Names have a power, a strange power, of hiding God. Speech has been bitterly defined as the art of hiding thought. Well, that sarcastic definition has in it a truth. The Eternal Word is the Revealer of God's thought, and every *true* word of man is *originally* the expression of a thought; but by degrees the word hides the thought. Language is valuable for the things of this life; but for the things of the other world, it is an encumbrance almost as much as an assistance. Words often hide from us our ignorance of even earthly truth. The child asks for information, and we satiate his curiosity with words. Who does not know how we satisfy ourselves with the name of some strange bird or plant, or the name of some new law in nature? It is a mystery perplexing us before. We get the name, and fancy we understand something more than we did before, but, in truth, we are more hopelessly ignorant; for before we felt there was a something we had not attained, and so we inquired and searched: now, we fancy we possess it, because we have got the name by which it is known, and the word covers over the abyss of our ignorance. If Jacob had got a *word*, that word might have satisfied him. He would have said, Now I understand God, and know all about Him.

Besides, names and words soon lose their meaning. In the process of years and centuries the meaning dies off them like the sunlight from the hills. The hills are there—the color and life are gone. The words of that creed, for example, which we read last Sunday (the Athanasian), were living words a few centuries ago. They have changed their meaning, and are, to ninety-nine out of every hundred, only dead words. Yet men tenaciously hold to the expressions of which they do not understand the meaning, and which have a very different meaning now from what they had once—Person, Procession, Substance: and they are almost worse with them than without them—for they conceal their ignorance, and place a barrier against the earnestness of inquiry. We repeat the creed by rote, but the profound truths of Being which the creed contains, how many of us understand?

All this affords an instructive lesson to parents and to teachers. In the education of a pupil or a child, the wise way is to deal with him as God dealt with his pupil, the child-man Jacob: for before the teaching of God, the wisest man, what is he but a child? God's plan was not to give names and words, but truths of feeling. That night, in that strange scene, He impressed on Jacob's soul a religious awe which was hereafter to develop, not a set of formal expressions, which would have satisfied with husks the cravings of the intellect and shut up the soul. Jacob felt the Infinite, who was more truly felt when least named. Words would have reduced that to the Finite: for, oh, to know all about God is one thing—to know the living God is another. Our rule seems to be this: Let a child's religion be expansive—capable of expansion—as little systematic as possible: let it lie upon the heart like the light loose soil, which can be broken through as the heart bursts into fuller life. If it be trodden down hard and stiff in formularies, it is more than probable that the whole must be burst through, and broken violently, and thrown off altogether, when the soul requires room to germinate.

And in this way, my young brethren, I have tried to deal with you. Not in creeds, nor even in the stiffness of the catechism, has truth been put before you. Rather has it been trusted to the impulses of the heart—on which, we believe, God works more efficaciously than we can do. A few simple truths: and then these have been left to work, and germinate, and swell. Baptism reveals to you this truth for the heart, that God is your Father, and that Christ has encouraged you to live as your Father's children. It has revealed that name which Jacob knew not—Love. Confirmation has told you another truth, that of self-dedication to

Him. Heaven is the service of God. The highest blessedness of life is powers and self consecrated to His will. These are the germs of truth; but it would have been miserable self-delusion, and most pernicious teaching, to have aimed at exhausting truth, or systematizing it. We are jealous of over-systematic teaching. God's love to you—the sacrifice of your lives to God—but the *meaning* of that? Oh, a long, long life will not exhaust the meaning—the Name of God. Feel him more and more—all else is but empty words.

Lastly, the effect of this revelation was to change Jacob's character. His name was changed from Jacob to Israel, because himself was an altered man. Hitherto there had been something subtle in his character—a certain cunning and craft—a want of breadth, as if he had no firm footing upon reality. The forgiveness of God twenty years before had not altered this. He remained Jacob, the subtle supplanter still. For, indeed, a man whose religion is chiefly the sense of forgiveness, does not thereby rise into integrity or firmness of character—a certain tenderness of character may very easily go along with a great deal of subtlety. Jacob was tender and devout, and grateful for God's pardon, and only half honest still. But this half-insincere man is brought into contact with the awful God, and his subtlety falls from him. He becomes real at once. Every insincere habit of mind shrivels in the face of God. One clear, true glance into the depths of Being, and the whole man is altered The name changes because the character is changed. No longer Jacob, *The Supplanter*, but Israel, *The Prince of God*—the champion of the Lord, who had fought *with* God and conquered; and who, henceforth, will fight *for* God, and be His true, loyal soldier: a larger, more unselfish name—a larger and more unselfish man—honest and true at last. No man becomes honest till he has got face to face with God. There is a certain insincerity about us all—a something dramatic. One of those dreadful moments which throw us upon ourselves, and strip off the hollowness of our outside show, must come before the insincere is true.

And again, young brethren, such a moment, at least of truthfulness, ought to have been this morning. Let the old pass. Let the name of the world pass into the Christian name. Baptism and Confirmation, the one gives, and the other reminds us of the giving of a better name and a truer. Henceforth be men. Lose the natural frailty, whatever it is. See God, and you *will* lose it.

To conclude, here is a question for each man separately—What is the name of your God? Not in the sense of this age, but in the sense of Jacob's age. What is the *Name* of the Deity you worship? In the present modern sense of Name, by which nothing more than epithet is meant, of course the reply is easy. The Name of yours is the God of Christian worship—the Threefold One—the Author of Existence, manifested in Divine Humanity, commingling with us as pure Spirit—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That, of course, you say is the name of your God. Now, put away names—give words to the winds. What do you adore in your heart of hearts? What is the name oftenest on your lips in your unfettered, spontaneous moments? If we overheard your secret thoughts, who and what is it which is to you the greatest and the best that you would desire to realize? The character of the rich man, or the successful, or the admired? Would the worst misery which could happen to you be the wreck of property—the worst shame, not to have done wrong, but to have sunk in the estimation of society? Then in the classifications of earth, which separate men into Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, you may rank as a worshipper of the Christian's God. But in the nomenclature of Heaven, where names can not stand for things, God sees you as an idolator—your highest is not His highest. The Name that is above every name is not the description of your God.

For life and death we have made our choice. The life of Christ—the life of Truth and Love; and if it must be, as the result of that, the Cross of Christ, with the obloquy and shame that wait on truth—that is the name before which we bow. In this world "there are gods many, and lords many: but to us there is but one Lord, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

IV.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS BY OBLIVION OF THE PAST.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. iii. 13, 14.

The first thing which strikes us on reading these verses is, that the Apostle Paul places himself on a level with the persons whom he addresses. He speaks to them as frail, weak men, and he gives them in himself a specimen of what frailty and weakness can achieve in the strength of Christ. And it is for this reason that the passage before us is one of the most encouraging in all the writings of St. Paul. For there is one aspect in which the apostle is presented to us, which is perhaps a depressing one. When we look at his almost superhuman career, reverence and admiration we must feel; but so far does he seem removed from ordinary life that imitation appears out of the question. Let us select but two instances of this discouraging aspect of the apostle's life. Most of us know the feeling of unaccountable depression which rests upon us when we find ourselves alone in a foreign town, with its tide of population ebbing and flowing past us, a mass of human life, in which we ourselves are nothing. But that was St. Paul's daily existence. He had consecrated himself to an almost perpetual exile. He had given up the endearments of domestic life forever. Home, in this world, St. Paul had none. With a capacity for the tenderest feelings of our nature, he had chosen for his lot the task of living among strangers, and as soon as they ceased to be strangers, quitting them again. He went on month by month, attaching congregations to himself, and month by month dooming himself to severance. And yet I know not that we read of one single trace of depression or discouragement suffered to rest on the apostle's mind. He seems to have been ever fresh and sanguine, the salient energy of his soul rising above the need of all human sympathy. It is the magnificent spectacle of missionary life, with more than missionary loneliness. There is something almost awful in the thought of a man who was so thoroughly in the next world that he needed not the consolations of this world. And yet, observe, there is nothing encouraging for us in this. It is very grand to look upon, very commanding, very full of awe; but it is so much above us, so little like any thing human that we know of, that we content ourselves with gazing on him as on the gliding swallow's flight, which we wonder at, but never think of imitating.

Now let us look at one other feature in St. Paul's character—his superiority to those temptations which are potent with ordinary men. We say nothing of his being above the love of money, of his indifference to a life of comfort and personal indulgence. Those temptations only assail the lower part of our nature, and it is not saintliness to be above these: common excellence is impossible otherwise. But when we come to look for those temptations which master the higher and the nobler man—ambition, jealousy, pride—it is not that we see them conquered by the apostle; they scarcely seem to have even lodged in his bosom at all. It was open to the apostle, if he had felt the ambition, to make for himself a name, to become the leader of a party in Corinth and in the world. And yet remember we not how sternly he put down the thought, and how he labored to merge his individuality in the cause, and make himself an equal of inferior men? "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, servants, by whom ye believed?"

Again, in respect of jealousy. Jealousy seems almost inseparable from human love. It is but the other side of love, the shadow cast by the light when the darker body intervenes. There came to him in prison that most cutting of all news to a minister's heart, that others were trying to supplant him in the affections of his converts. But his was that lofty love which cares less for reciprocation than for the well-being of the objects loved. The rival teachers were teaching from emulation; still they could not but bless by preaching Christ to his disciples. "What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." There is not a trace of jealousy in these words.

Once more: Degrading things were laid to his charge. The most liberal-minded of mankind was charged with bigotry. The most generous of men was suspected of avarice. If ever pride were venial, it had been then. Yet read through the whole of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and say if one spark of pride be visible. He might have shut himself up in high and dignified silence. He might have refused to condescend to solicit a renewal of the love which had once grown cold; and yet we look in vain for the symptoms of offended pride. Take this one passage as a specimen: "Behold, this third time I am willing to come unto you; . . . . and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am beloved."

In this there is very little encouragement. A man so thoroughly above human resentment, human passions, human weakness, does not seem to us an example. The nearer Humanity approaches a perfect standard, the less does it command our sympathy. A man must be weak before we can feel encouraged to attempt what he has done. It is not the Redeemer's sinlessness, nor His unconquerable fidelity to duty, nor His superhuman nobleness, that win our desire to imitate. Rather His tears at the grave of friendship, His shrinking from the sharpness of death, and the feeling of human doubt which swept across His soul like a desolation. These make Him one of us, and therefore our example.

And it is on this account that this passage seems to us so full of encouragement. It is the precious picture of a frail and struggling apostle– precious both to the man and to the minister. To the man, because it tells him that what he feels St. Paul felt, imperfect, feeble, far from what he would wish to be; yet with sanguine hope, expecting progress in the saintly life. Precious to the minister, because it tells him that his very weakness may be subservient to a people's strength. Not in his transcendent gifts—not in his saintly endowments—not even in his apostolic devotedness, is St. Paul so close to our hearts, as when he makes himself one with us, and says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended."

And we know not how otherwise any minister could hope to do good when he addresses men who are infinitely his superiors in almost every thing. We know not how else he could urge on to a sanctity which he has not himself attained: we know not how he could dare to speak severely of weaknesses by which he himself is overpowered, and passions of which he feels in himself all the terrible tyranny, if it were not that he expects to have tacitly understood *that* in his own case which the apostle urged in every form of expression: Brethren, be as I am, for I am as ye are—struggling, baffled, but panting for emancipation.

We confine ourselves to two subjects:

I. The apostle's object in this life.
II. The means which he used for attaining it.

I. The apostle's object or aim in this life was "perfection." In the verse before—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."—Perfection was his unreached mark.

And less than this no Christian can aim at. There are given to us "exceeding great and precious promises," that by means of these we might be partakers of the Divine Nature. Not merely to be equal to the standard of our day, nor even to surpass it. Not to be superior to the men amongst whom we live. Not to forgive those who have little to be forgiven. Not to love our friends, but to be the children of our Father—to be pure even as Christ is pure—to be "perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

It is easily perceivable why this perfection is unattainable in this life. Faultlessness is conceivable, being merely the negation of evil. But perfection is positive, the attainment of all conceivable excellence. It is long as eternity—expansive as God. Perfection is our mark: yet never will the aim be so true and steady as to strike the golden centre. Perfection of character, yet, even to the dying hour, it will be but this, "I count not myself to have apprehended." Christian life is like those questions in mathematics which never can be exactly answered. All you can attain is an approximation to the truth. You may labor on for years and never reach it; yet your labor is not in vain. Every figure you add makes the fraction nearer than the last to the million-millionth; and so it is with holiness. Christ is our mark—the perfect standard of God in Christ. But be as holy as you will, there is a step nearer, and another, and another, and so infinitely on.

To this object the apostle gave himself with singleness of aim. "*This one thing I do.*" The life of man is a vagrant, changeful desultoriness; like that of children sporting on an enamelled meadow, chasing now a painted butterfly, which loses its charm by being caught—now a wreath of mist, which falls damp upon the hand with disappointment—now a feather of thistle-down, which is crushed in the grasp. In the midst of all this fickleness, St. Paul had found a purpose to which he gave the undivided energy of his soul. "This one thing I do—I press towards the mark."

This is intelligible enough in the case of a minister; for whether he be in the pulpit or beside a sick man's bed—or furnishing his mind in the study, evidently and unmistakably it is his profession to be doing only one thing. But in the manifold life of the man of the world and business, it is not so easy to understand how this can be carried out. To answer this, we observe there is a difference between doing and being. Perfection is being, not doing; it is not to effect an act, but to achieve a character. If the aim of life were to do something, then, as in an earthly business, except in doing this one thing the business would be at a stand-still. The student is not doing the one thing of student life when he has ceased to think or read. The laborer leaves his work undone when the spade is not in his hand, and he sits beneath the hedge to rest. But in Christian life, every moment and every act is an opportunity for doing the one thing, of *becoming* Christ-like. Every day is full of a most impressive experience. Every temptation to evil temper which can assail us to-day will be an opportunity to decide the question whether we shall gain the calmness and the rest of Christ, or whether we shall be tossed by the restlessness and agitation of the world. Nay, the very vicissitudes of the seasons, day and night, heat and cold, affecting us variably, and producing exhilaration or depression, are so contrived as to conduce to wards the being which we become, and decide whether we shall be masters of ourselves, or whether we shall be swept at the mercy of accident and circumstance, miserably susceptible of merely outward influences. Infinite as are the varieties of life, so manifold are the paths to saintly character; and he who has not found out how directly or indirectly to make every thing converge towards his soul's sanctification, has as yet missed the meaning of this life.

In pressing towards this "mark," the apostle attained a prize; and here I offer an observation, which is not one of mere subtlety of refinement, but deeply practical. The mark was perfection of character, the prize was blessedness. But the apostle did not aim at the prize of blessedness, he aimed at the mark of perfectness. In becoming perfect he attained happiness, but his primary aim was not happiness.

We may understand this by an illustration. In student-life there are those who seek knowledge for its own sake, and there are those who seek it for the sake of the prize, and the honor, and the subsequent success in life that knowledge brings. To those who seek knowledge for its own sake the labor is itself reward. Attainment is the highest reward. Doubtless the prize stimulates exertion; encourages and forms a part of the motive, but only a subordinate one: and knowledge would still have "a price above rubies," if there were no prize at all. They who seek knowledge for the sake of a prize are not genuine lovers of knowledge—they only love the rewards of knowledge: had it no honor or substantial advantage connected with it, they would be indolent.

Applying this to our subject, I say this is a spurious goodness which is good for the sake of reward. The child that speaks truth for the sake of the praise of truth, is not truthful. The man who is honest because honesty is the best policy, has not integrity in his heart. He who endeavors to be humble, and holy, and perfect, in order to win heaven, has only a counterfeit religion. God for His own sake—Goodness because it is good—Truth because it is lovely—this is the Christian's aim. The prize is only an incentive; inseparable from success, but not the aim itself.

With this limitation, however, we remark that it is a Christian duty to dwell much more on the thought of future blessedness than most men do. If ever the apostle's step began to flag, the radiant diadem before him gave new vigor to his heart, and we know how at the close of his career the vision became more vivid and more entrancing. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory!" It is our privilege, if we are on our way to God, to keep steadily before us the thought of home. Make it a matter of habit. Force yourself at night, alone, in the midst of the world's bright sights, to pause to think of the heaven which is yours. Let it calm you and ennoble you, and give you cheerfulness to endure It was so that Moses was enabled to live amongst all the fascinations of his courtly life, with a heart unseduced from his laborious destiny. By faith . . . "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Why? "For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." It was so that our Master strengthened his human soul for its sharp earthly endurance. "For the joy that was set before him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." If we would become heavenly-minded, we must let the imagination realize the blessedness to which we are moving on. Let us think much of rest—the rest which is not of indolence, but of powers in perfect equilibrium. The rest which is deep as summer midnight, yet full of life and force as summer sunshine, the sabbath of eternity. Let us think of the love of God, which we shall feel in its full tide upon our souls. Let us think of that marvellous career of sublime occupation which shall belong to the spirits of just men made perfect; when we shall fill a higher place in God's universe, and more consciously, and with more distinct insight, co-operate with God in the rule over His Creation. "I press towards the mark—for the prize."

II. We pass to our second topic. The means which St. Paul found available for the attainment of Divine and perfect character. His great principle was to "forget the things which were behind, and to reach forward to the things which were before." The wisdom of a divine life lies hid in this principle. I shall endeavor to expand the sentiment to make it intelligible.

What are the things behind, which are to be forgotten?

1. If we would progress in Christian life, we must forget the days of innocence that lie behind us. Let not this be misunderstood. Innocent, literally, no man ever is. We come into the world with tendencies to evil; but there was a time in our lives when those were only tendencies. A proneness to sin we had; but we had not yet sinned. The moment had not yet arrived when that cloud settles down upon the heart, which in all of after-life is never entirely removed: the sense of guilt, the anguish of lost innocence, the restless feeling of a heart no longer pure. Popularly, we call that innocence; and when men become bitterly aware that early innocence of heart is gone, they feel as if all were lost.

and so look back to what they reckon holier days with a peculiar fondness of regret. I believe there is much that is merely feeble and sentimental in this regret. Our early innocence is nothing more than ignorance of evil. Christian life is not a retaining of that ignorance of evil, nor even a returning of it again. We lose our mere negative sinlessness. We put on a firm manly holiness. Human innocence is not to know evil; Christian saintliness is to know evil and good, and prefer good. It is possible for a parent, with over-fastidious refinement, to prolong the duration of this innocence unnaturally. He may lock up his library, and prevent the entrance to forbidden books; he may exercise a jealous censorship over every book and every companion that comes into the house; he may remove the public journal from the table, lest an eye may chance to rest upon the contaminating portion of its pages; but he has only put off the evil hour. He has sent into the world a young man of eighteen or twenty, ignorant of evil as a child, but not innocent as an angel who abhors the evil. No; we can not get back our past ignorance, neither is it desirable we should. No sane mind wishes for that which is impossible. And it is no more to be regretted than the blossom is to be regretted when fruit is hardening in its place; no more to be regretted than the slender gracefulness of the sapling, when you have got instead the woody fibre of the heart of oak of which the ship is made; no more to be regretted than the green blade when the ear has come instead, bending down in yellow ripeness. Our innocence is gone, withered with the business-like contact with the great world. It is one of the things behind. Forget it. It was worth very little. And now for something of a texture more firm, more enduring. We will not mourn over the loss of simplicity, if we have got instead souls indurated by experience, disciplined, even by fall, to refuse the evil and to choose the good.

2. In the next place, it is wise to forget our days of youth. Up to a certain period of life it is the tendency of man to look forward. There is a marvellous prodigality with which we throw away our present happiness when we are young, which belongs to those who feel that they are rich in happiness, and never expect to be bankrupts. It almost seems one of the signatures of our immortality that we squander time as if there were a dim consciousness that we are in possession of an eternity of it; but as we arrive at middle age, it is the tendency of man to look back.

To a man of middle life, existence is no longer a dream, but a reality. He has not much more new to look forward to, for the character of his life is generally fixed by that time. His profession, his home, his occupations, will be for the most part what they are now. He will make few new acquaintances—no new friends. It is the solemn thought connected with middle age that life's last business is begun in earnest; and it is then, midway between the cradle and the grave, that a man begins to look back and marvel with a kind of remorseful feeling that he let the days of youth go by so half enjoyed. It is the pensive autumn feeling—it is the sensation of half sadness that we experience when the longest day of the year is past, and every day that follows is shorter, and the lights fainter, and the feebler shadows tell that nature is hastening with gigantic footsteps to her winter grave. So does man look back upon his youth. When the first gray hairs become visible—when the unwelcome truth fastens itself upon the mind that a man is no longer going up the hill, but down, and that the sun is already westering, he looks back on things behind. Now this is a natural feeling, but is it the high Christian tone of feeling? In the spirit of this verse, we may assuredly answer, No. We who have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, what have we to do with things past? When we were children, we thought as children. But now there lies before us manhood, with its earnest work; and then old age, and then the grave, and then home.

And so manhood in the Christian life is a better thing than boyhood, because it is a riper thing; and old age ought to be a brighter, and a calmer, and a more serene thing than manhood. There is a second youth for man, better and holier than his first, if he will look on and not back. There is a peculiar simplicity of heart and a touching singleness of purpose in Christian old age, which has ripened gradually and not fitfully. It is then that to the wisdom of the serpent is added the harmlessness of the dove; it is then that to the firmness of manhood is joined almost the gentleness of womanhood; it is then that the somewhat austere and sour character of growing strength, moral and intellectual, mellows into the rich ripeness of an old age made sweet and tolerant by experience; it is then that man returns to first principles. There comes a love more pure and deep than the boy could ever feel; there comes a conviction, with a strength beyond that which the boy could never know, that the earliest lesson of life is infinite, Christ is all.

3. Again, it is wise to forget past errors. There is a kind of temperament which, when indulged, greatly hinders growth in real godliness. It is that rueful, repentant, self-accusing

temper which is always looking back, and microscopically observing how that which is done might have been better done. Something of this we ought to have. A Christian ought to feel always that he has partially failed, but that ought not to be the only feeling. Faith ought ever to be a sanguine, cheerful thing; and perhaps in practical life we could not give a better account of faith than by saying that it is, amidst much failure, having the heart to *try again.* Our best deeds are marked by imperfection; but if they really were our best, "forget the things that are behind"—we shall do better next time.

Under this head we include all those mistakes which belong to our circumstances. We can all look back to past life and see mistakes that have been made, to a certain extent perhaps, irreparable ones. We can see where our education was fatally misdirected. The profession chosen for you perhaps was not the fittest, or you are out of place, and many things might have been better ordered. Now on this apostolic principle it is wise to forget all that. It is not by regretting what is irreparable that true work is to be done, but by making the best of what we are. It is not by complaining that we have not the right tools, but by using well the tools we have. What we are, and where we are, is God's providential arrangement—God's doing, though it may be man's misdoing; and the manly and the wise way is to look your disadvantages in the face, and see what can be made out of them. Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest false steps. Poor mediocrity may secure that; but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes: organize victory out of mistakes.

Finally, past guilt lies behind us, and is well forgotten. There is a way in which even sin may be banished from the memory. If a man looks forward to the evil he is going to commit, and satisfies himself that it is inevitable, and so treats it lightly, he is acting as a fatalist. But if a man partially does this, looking backward, feeling that sin when it is past has become part of the history of God's universe, and is not to be wept over forever, he only does that which the Giver of the Gospel permits him to do. Bad as the results have been in the world of making light of sin, those of brooding over it too much have been worse. Remorse has done more harm than even hardihood. It was remorse which fixed Judas in an unalterable destiny; it was remorse which filled the monasteries for ages with men and women whose lives became useless to their fellow-creatures; it is remorse which so remembers by-gone faults as to paralyze the energies for doing Christ's work; for when you break a Christian's spirit, it is all over with progress. Oh, we want every thing that is hopeful and encouraging for our work, for God knows it is not an easy one. And therefore it is that the Gospel comes to the guiltiest of us all at the very outset with the inspiring news of pardon. You remember how Christ treated sin. Sin of oppression and hypocrisy indignantly, but sin of frailty—" 'Hath no man condemned thee?' 'No man, Lord.' 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.' " As if he would bid us think more of what we may be than of what we have been.

There was the wisdom of life in the proverb with which the widow of Tekoah pleaded for the restoration of Absalom from banishment before David. Absalom had slain his brother Amnon. Well, Amnon was dead before his time; but the severity of revenge could never bring him back again. "We must all die," said the wise woman, "and are as water spilt upon the ground, which can not be gathered up again." Christian brethren, *do not stop too long to weep over spilt water.* Forget your guilt, and wait to see what eternity has to say to it. You have other work to do now.

So let us work out the spirit of the apostle's plan. Innocence, youth, success, error, guilt—let us forget them all.

Not backward are our glances bent,
But onward to our Father's home.

In conclusion, remember Christian progress is only possible in Christ. It is a very lofty thing to be a Christian; for a Christian is a man who is restoring God's likeness to his character; and therefore the apostle calls it here a high calling. High as heaven is the calling wherewith we are called. But this very height makes it seem impracticable. It is natural to say, All that was well enough for one so transcendently gifted as Paul to hope for: but I am no gifted man; I have no iron strength of mind; I have no sanguine hopefulness of character; I am disposed to look on the dark side of things; I am undetermined, weak, vacillating; and then I have a whole army of passions and follies to contend with. We have to remind such men of one thing they have forgotten. It is the high calling of God, if you will; but it is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. What the world calls virtue is a name and a dream without Christ. The foundation of all human excellence must be laid deep in the blood of the Redeemer's cross, and in the power of His Resurrection. First let a man know that all his past is wrong and sinful; then let him fix his eye on the love of God in Christ loving him—even him, the guilty one. Is there no strength in that—no power in the knowledge that all that is gone by *is gone*, and that a fresh, clear future is open? It is not the progress of virtue that God asks for, but progress in saintliness, empowered by hope and love.

Lastly, let each man put this question to himself, "Dare I look on?" With an earnest Christian, it is "reaching forth to those things which are before." Progress ever. And then just as we go to rest in this world tired, and wake up fresh and vigorous in the morning, so does the Christian go to sleep in the world's night, weary with the work of life, and then on the resurrection-day he wakes in his second and his brighter morning. It is well for a believer to look on. Dare you? Remember, out of Christ, it is not wisdom, but madness to look on. You must look back, for the longest and the best day is either past or passing. It will be winter soon—desolate, uncheered, hopeless, winter—old age, with its dreariness and its disappointments, and its querulous broken-heartedness; and there is no second spring for you—no resurrection-morning of blessedness to dawn on the darkness of your grave. God has only one method of salvation, the Cross of Christ. God can have only one; for the Cross of Christ means death to evil, life to good. There is no other way to salvation but that; for that in itself is, and alone is, salvation. Out of Christ, therefore, it is woe to the man who reaches forth to the things which are before. To such I say; My unhappy brethren, Omnipotence itself cannot change the darkness of your destiny.

V.

TRIUMPH OVER HINDRANCES—ZACCHEUS.

"And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."—Luke xix. 8.

There are persons to whom a religious life seems smooth and easy. Gifted by God constitutionally with a freedom from those inclinations which in other men are tyrannous and irresistible, endued with those aspirations which other men seem to lack, it appears as if they were born saints.

There are others to whom it is all a trial—a whole world of passions keep up strife within. The name of the spirit which possesses them is Legion. It is a hard fight from the cradle to the grave—up-hill work—toil all the way; and at the last it seems as if they had only just kept their ground.

There are circumstances which seem as if intended as a very hot-bed for the culture of religious principle, in which the difficulty appears to be to escape being religious.

There are others in which religious life seems impossible. For the soul, tested by temptation, is like iron tried by weights. No iron bar is absolutely infrangible. Its strength is tested by the weight which it will bear without breaking. No soul is absolutely impeccable. It seems as if all we can dare to ask even of the holiest is how much temptation he can bear without giving way. There are societies amidst which some are forced to dwell daily, in which the very idea of Christian rest is negatived. There are occupations in which purity of heart can scarcely be conceived. There are temptations to which some are subjected in a long series, in which to have stood upright would have demanded not a man's but an angel's strength.

Here are two cases: one in which temperament and circumstances are favorable to religion; another in which both are adverse. If life were always the brighter side of these pictures, the need of Christian instruction and Christian casuistry—*i. e.*, the direction for conduct under various supposable cases, would be superseded. The end of the institution of a Church would be gone; for the Church exists for the purposes of mutual sympathy and mutual support. But the fact is, life is for the most part a path of varied trial. How to lead the life divine, surrounded by temptations from within and from without—how to breathe freely the atmosphere of heaven, while the feet yet touch earth—how to lead the life of Christ, who shrunk from no scene of trying duty, and took the temptations of man's life as they came—or how even to lead the ordinary saintly life, winning experience from fall, and permanent strength out of momentary weakness, and victory out of defeat, this is the problem.

The possibility of such a life is guaranteed by the history of Zaccheus. Zaccheus was tempted much, and yet Zaccheus contrived to be a servant of Christ. If we wanted a motto to prefix to this story, we should append this: The successful pursuit of religion under difficulties.

These, then, are the two branches of our thoughts to-day:

I. The hindrances to a religious life.
II. The Christian triumph over difficulties.

I. The hindrances of Zaccheus were twofold: partly circumstantial—partly personal. Partly circumstantial, arising from his riches and his profession of a publican.

Now the publican's profession exposed him to temptations in these three ways. First of all, in the way of *opportunity*. A publican was a gatherer of the Roman public imposts. Not, however, as now, when all is fixed, and the Government pays the gatherer of the taxes. The Roman publican paid so much to the Government for the privilege of collecting them, and then indemnified himself, and appropriated what overplus he could, from the taxes which he gathered. There was, therefore, evidently a temptation to overcharge, and a temptation to oppress. To overcharge, because the only redress the payer of the taxes had was an appeal to law, in which his chance was small before a tribunal where the judge was a Roman, and the accuser an official of the Roman Government. A temptation to oppress, because the threat of law was nearly certain to extort a bribe. Besides this, most of us must have remarked that a certain harshness of manner is contracted by those who have the rule over the poor. They come in contact with human souls only in the way of business. They have to do with their ignorance, their stupidity, their attempts to deceive; and hence the tenderest-hearted men become impatient and apparently unfeeling. Hard men, knowing that redress is difficult, become harder still, and exercise their authority with the insolence of office; so that, when to the insolence of office and the likelihood of impunity there was superadded the pecuniary advantage annexed to a tyrannical extortion, any one may understand how great the publican's temptation was.

Another temptation was presented: to live satisfied with a low morality. The standard of right and wrong is eternal in the heavens—unchangeably one and the same. But here on earth it is perpetually variable—it is one in one age or nation, another in another. Every profession has its conventional morality, current nowhere else. That which is permitted by the peculiar standard of truth acknowledged at the bar is falsehood among plain men; that which would be reckoned in the army purity and tenderness would be elsewhere licentiousness and cruelty. There is a parliamentary honor quite distinct from honor between man and man. Trade has its honesty, which rightly named is fraud. And in all these cases the temptation is to live content with the standard of a man's own profession or society; and this is the real difference between the worldly man and the religious man. He is the worldling who lives below that standard, or no higher; he is the servant of God who lives *above* his age. But you will perceive that amongst publicans a very little would count much—that which would be laxity to a Jew and shame to a Pharisee, might be reckoned very strict morality among the Publicans.

Again, Zaccheus was tempted to that hardness in evil which comes from having no character to support. But the extent to which sin hardens depends partly on the estimate taken of it by society. The falsehood of Abraham, the guilt and violence of David, were very different in their effect on character in an age when truth and purity and gentleness were scarcely recognized, from what they would be now. Then Abraham and David had not so sinned against their consciences as a man would sin now in doing the same acts, because their consciences were less enlightened. A man might be a slave-trader in the Western hemisphere, and in other respects a humane, upright, honorable man. In the last century, the holy Newton of Olney trafficked in slaves after becoming religious. A man who had dealings in this way in this country could not remain upright and honorable, even if it were conceivable that he began as such; because he would either conceal from the world his share in the traffic, and so, doing it secretly, would become a hypocrite, or else he must cover his wickedness by effrontery, doing it in defiance of public shame, and so getting seared in conscience. Because in the one case, the sin remaining sin, yet countenanced by society, does not degrade the man nor injure his conscience even to the same extent to which it would ruin the other, whose conscience must become seared by defiance of public shame. It is scarcely possible to unite together the idea of an executioner of public justice and a humble, holy man. And yet assuredly, not from any thing that there is unlawful in the office; an executioner's trade is as lawful as a soldier's. A soldier is placed there by his country to slay his country's enemies, and a doomster is placed there to slay the transgressors of his country's laws. Wherein lies the difference which leaves the one a man of honor, and almost necessitates the other to be taken from the rank of reprobates, or else gradually to become such? Simply the difference of public opinion—public scorn. Once there was no shame in the office of the executioner, and the judge of Israel, with his own hands, hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Phineas executed summary and sanguinary vengeance, and his name has been preserved in a hymn by his country's gratitude. The whole congregation became executioners in the case of blasphemy, and no abandonment was the result. But the voice of public opinion pronouncing an office or a man scandalous, either finds or else makes them what it has pronounced them. The executioner is or becomes an outcast, because reckoned such.

More vile and more degraded than even the executioner's office with us was the office of publican among the Jews. A penitent publican could not go to the house of God without the risk of hearing muttered near him the sanctimonious thanksgiving of Pharisaism: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as this publican." A publican, even though high in office, and rich besides, could not receive into his house a teacher of religion without being saluted by the murmurs of the crowd, as in this case: "He is gone to eat with a man that is a sinner." A sinner! The proof of that? The only proof was that he was *a publican*. There are men and women in this congregation who have committed sins that never have been published to the world; and therefore, though they be still untouched by the love of God, they have never sunk down to degradation; whereas the very same sins, branded with public shame, have sunk others not worse than them down to the lowest infamy. There is no principle in education and in life more sure than this—to stigmatize is to ruin; to take away character is to take away all. There is no power committed to man, capable of use and abuse, more certain and more awful than this: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."

This, then, was a temptation arising out of Zaccheus's circumstances—to become quite hardened by having no character to support.

The *personal* hindrance to a religious life lay in the recollection of past guilt. Zaccheus had done wrong, and no four-fold restitution will undo that where only remorse exists.

There is a difference between remorse and penitence. Remorse is the consciousness of wrong-doing with no sense of love. Penitence is that same consciousness, with the feeling of tenderness and gratefulness added.

And pernicious as have been the consequences of self-righteousness, more destructive still have been the consequences of remorse. If self-righteousness has slain its thousands, remorse has slain its tens of thousands; for, indisputably, self-righteousness secures a man from degradation. Have you never wondered at the sure walk of those persons who, to trust to their own estimate of themselves, are always right? They never sin, their children are better brought up than any other children, their conduct is irreproachable. Pride saves them from a fall. That element of self-respect, healthful always, is their safeguard. Yes, the Pharisee was right. He is not an extortioner, nor unjust, and he is regular in his payments and his duties. That was self-righteousness: it kept him from saintliness, but it saved him from degradation too. Remorse, on the contrary, crushes. If a man lose the world's respect, he can retreat back upon the consciousness of the God within. But if a man lose his own respect, he sinks down and down, and deeper yet, until he can get it back again by feeling that he is sublimely loved, and he dares at last to respect that which God vouchsafes to care for. Remorse is like the clog of an insoluble debt. The debtor is proverbially extravagant—one more, and one more expense. What can it matter when the great bankruptcy is near? And so, in the same way one sin, and one more. Why not? why should he pause when all is hopeless? what is one added to that which is already infinite?

Past guilt becomes a hindrance too in another way — it makes fresh sin easier. Let any one, out of a series of transgressions, compare the character of the first and the last. The first time there was the shudder and the horror, and the violent struggle, and the feeling of impossibility. I can not —*can not* do that. The second time there was faint reluctance, made more faint by the recollection of the facility and the pleasantness of the first transgression, and the last time there is neither shudder nor reluctance, but the eager plunge down the precipice on the brink of which he trembled once. All this was against Zaccheus. A publican had lost self-respect, and sin was therefore easy.

II. Pass we on to the triumph over difficulties. In this there is man's part, and God's part.

Man's part in Zaccheus's case was exhibited in the discovery of expedients. The Redeemer came to Jericho, and Zaccheus desired to see that blessed countenance, whose very looks, he was told, shed peace upon restless spirits and fevered hearts. But Zaccheus was small of stature, and a crowd surrounded him. Therefore he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree. You must not look on this as a mere act of curiosity. They who thronged the steps of Jesus were a crowd formed of different materials from the crowd which would have been found in the amphitheatre. He was there as a religious teacher or prophet; and they who took pains to see Him, at least were the men who looked for salvation in Israel. This, therefore, was a *religious* act.

We have heard of the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." The shepherd, with no apparatus besides his thread and beads, has lain on his back, on the starry night, mapped the heavens, and unconsciously become a distinguished astronomer. The peasant-boy, with no tools but his rude knife, and a visit now and then to the neighboring town, has begun his scientific education by producing a watch that would mark the time. The blind man, trampling upon impossibilities, has explored the economy of the bee-hive, and, more wondrous still, lectured on the laws of light. The timid stammerer, with pebbles in his mouth, and the roar of the sea-surge in his ear, has attained correctest elocution, and swayed as one man the changeful tides of the mighty masses of the Athenian democracy. All these were *expedients.* It is thus in the life religious. No man ever trod exactly the path that others trod before him. There is no exact chart laid down for the voyage. The rocks and quicksands are shifting. He who enters upon the ocean of existence arches his sails to an untried breeze. He is "the first that ever burst into that lonely sea." Every life is a *new* life. Every day is a *new* day—like nothing that ever went before, or can ever follow after. No books—no systems—no forecast—set of rules, can provide for all cases; every case is a new case. And just as in any earthly enterprize, the conduct of a campaign, or the building of a bridge, unforeseen difficulties and unexpected disasters must be met by that inexhaustible fertility of invention which belongs to those who do not live to God *second-hand.* We must live to God first-hand. If we are in earnest, as Zaccheus was, we must invent peculiar means of getting over peculiar difficulties.

There are times when the truest courage is shown in retreating from a temptation. There are times when, not being on a level with other men in qualifications of temper, mind, character, we must compensate by inventions and Christian expedients. You must climb over the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and Christ—you must "run before" and forecast trials, and get into the sycamore solitude. Without a living life like this, you will never get a glimpse of the King in his beauty; you will never see Him. You will be just on the point of seeing Him, and yet be shut out by some unexpected hindrance.

Observe again, an illustration of this: Zaccheus's habit of restoration. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold." There are two ways of interpreting this; it may have reference to the future. It commonly is so interpreted. It is supposed that, touched by the love of Christ, Zaccheus proclaimed this as his resolve—I hereby promise to give the half of my goods to the poor. But it is likely that this interpretation has been put upon it in order to make it square with the evangelical order of emotions—grace first, liberality after. The interpretation seems rather put on the passage than found there. The word is not future, but singular. Behold, Lord, I give. And it seems more natural to take it as a statement of the habit of Zaccheus's previous life. If so, then all is plain. This man, so maligned, had been leading a righteous life after all, according to the Mosaic standard. On the day of defense he stands forward and vindicates himself from the aspersion. "These are my habits." And the Son of Man vindicates him before all. Yes, publican as he is, he too is a "son of Abraham."

Here, then, were *expedients* by which he overcame the hindrances of his position. The tendency to the hardness and selfishness of riches he checked by a rule of giving half away. The tendency to extortion he met by fastening on himself the recollection, that when the hot moment of temptation had passed away, he would be severely dealt with before the tribunal of his own conscience, and unrelentingly sentenced to restore fourfold.

God's part in this triumph over difficulties is exhibited in the address of Jesus: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Two things we note here: Invitation and Sympathy. Invitation—"come down." Say what we will of Zaccheus seeking Jesus, the truth is, Jesus was seeking Zaccheus. For what other reason but the will of God had Jesus come to Jericho but to seek Zaccheus and such as he? Long years Zaccheus had been living in only a dim consciousness of being a servant of God and goodness. At last the Saviour is born into the world—appears in Judea—comes to Jericho, Zaccheus's town—passes down Zaccheus's street, and by Zaccheus's house, and up to Zaccheus's person. What is all this but seeking—what the Bible calls election? Now there is a specimen in this of the ways of God with men in this world. We do not seek God—God seeks us. There is a Spirit pervading time and space who seeks the souls of men. At last the seeking becomes reciprocal—the Divine Presence is felt afar, and the soul begins to turn towards it. Then when we begin to seek God, we become conscious that God is seeking us. It is at that period that we distinguish the voice of personal invitation—"Zaccheus!" It is then that the Eternal Presence makes its abode with us, and the hour of unutterable joy begins, when the banquet of Divine Love is spread within the soul, and the Son of God abides there as at a feast. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

This is Divine Grace. We are saved by grace, not will. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." In the matter of man's salvation God is first. He comes to us self-invited—He names us by name—He isolates us from the crowd, and sheds upon us the sense of personal recognition—He pronounces the benediction, till we feel that there is a mysterious blessing on our house, and on our meal, and on our heart. "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

Lastly, the Divine part was done in Sympathy. By sympathy we commonly mean little more than condolence. If the tear start readily at the voice of grief, and the purse-strings open at the accents of distress, we talk of a man's having great sympathy. To weep with those who weep:—common sympathy does not mean much more.

The sympathy of Christ was something different from this. Sympathy to this extent, no doubt, Zaccheus could already command. If Zaccheus were sick, even a Pharisee would have given him medicine. If Zaccheus had been in need, a Jew would not have scrupled to bestow an alms. If Zaccheus had been bereaved, many even of that crowd that murmured when they saw him treated by Christ like a son of Abraham would have given to his sorrow the tribute of a sigh.

The sympathy of Jesus was fellow-feeling for all that is human. He did not condole with Zaccheus upon his trials—He did not talk to him "about his soul"—He did not preach to him about his sins—He did not force his way into his house to lecture him—He simply said, "I will abide at thy house:" thereby identifying himself with a publican: thereby acknowledging a publican for a brother. Zaccheus a publican? Zaccheus a sinner? Yes; but Zaccheus is a man. His heart throbs at cutting words. He has a sense of human honor. He feels the burning shame of the world's disgrace. Lost? Yes:—but the Son of Man, with the blood of the human race in His veins, is a Brother to the lost.

It is in this entire and perfect sympathy with all Humanity that the heart of Jesus differs from every other heart that is found among the sons of men. And it is this—oh, it is this, which is the chief blessedness of having such a Saviour. If you are poor you can only get a miserable sympathy from the rich; with the best intentions they can not understand you. Their sympathy is awkward. If you are in pain, it is only a factitious and constrained sympathy you get from those in health—feelings forced, adopted kindly, but imperfect still. They sit beside you, when the regular condolence is done, conversing on topics with each other that jar upon the ear. *They* sympathize? Miserable comforters are they all. If you are miserable, and tell out your grief, you have the shame of feeling that you were not understood; and that you have bared your inner self to a rude gaze. If you are in doubt, you can not tell your doubts to religious people; no, not even to the ministers of Christ—for they have no place for doubts in their largest system. They ask, What right have you to doubt? They suspect your character. They shake the head; and whisper it about gravely, that you read strange books—that you are verging on infidelity. If you are depressed with guilt, to whom shall you tell out your tale of shame? The confessional, with its innumerable evils, and yet indisputably soothing power, is passed away; and there is nothing to supply its place. You can not speak to your brother man, for you injure him by doing so, or else weaken yourself. You can not tell it to society, for society judges in the gross, by general rules, and can not take into account the delicate differences of transgression. It banishes the frail penitent, and does homage to the daring hard transgressor.

Then it is that, repulsed on all sides and lonely, we turn to Him whose mighty Heart understands and feels all. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And then it is that, exactly like Zaccheus, misunderstood, suspected by the world, suspected by our own hearts—the very voice of God apparently against us—isolated and apart, we speak to Him from the loneliness of the sycamore-tree, heart to heart, and pulse to pulse. "Lord, Thou knowest all things:" Thou knowest my secret charities, and my untold self-denials. "*Thou* knowest that I love thee."

Remark, in conclusion, the power of this sympathy on Zaccheus's character. Salvation that day came to Zaccheus's house. What brought it? What touched him? Of course, "the gospel." Yes; but what is the gospel? What was his gospel? Speculations or revelations concerning the Divine Nature?—the scheme of the atonement?—or of the in carnation?—or baptismal regeneration? Nay, but the Divine sympathy of the Divinest Man. The personal love of God, manifested in the face of Jesus Christ. The floodgates of his soul were opened, and the whole force that was in the man flowed forth. Whichever way you take that expression "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor:" If it referred to the future, then, touched by unexpected sympathy, finding himself no longer an outcast, he made that resolve in gratefulness. If to the past, then, still touched by sympathy, he who had never tried to vindicate himself before the world, was softened to tell out the tale of his secret munificence. This is what I have been doing all the time they slandered me, and none but God knew it.

It required something to make a man like that talk of things which he had not suffered his own left hand to know, before a scorning world. But, anyhow, it was the manifested Fellowship of the Son of Man which brought salvation to that house.

Learn this: When we live the gospel so, and preach the gospel so, sinners will be brought to God. We know not yet the gospel power; for who trusts, as Jesus did, all to that? Who ventures, as He did, upon the power of Love, in sanguine hopefulness of the most irreclaimable? who makes *that*, the divine humility of Christ, "the gospel?" More than by eloquence, more than by accurate doctrine, more than by ecclesiastical order, more than by any doctrine trusted to by the most earnest and holy men, shall we and others, sinful rebels, outcasts, be won to Christ by that central truth of all the Gospel—the entireness of the Redeemer's sympathy. In other words, the Love of Jesus.

VI.

THE SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE OF THE SABBATH.

"Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."—Col. ii. 16, 17.

No sophistry of criticism can explain away the obvious meaning of these words. The apostle speaks of certain institutions as Jewish: shadowy: typical: and among these we are surprised to find the sabbath-days. It has been contended that there is here no allusion to the seventh day of rest, but only to certain Jewish holydays, not of Divine institution. But, in the first place, the "holydays" have been already named in the same verse; in the next we are convinced that no plain man, reading this verse for the first time, without a doctrine to support, would have put such an interpretation upon the word: and we may be sure that St. Paul would never have risked so certain a misconstruction of his words by the use of an ambiguous phrase. This, then, is the first thing we lay down—a very simple postulate, one would think—when the apostle *says* the sabbath-days, he *means* the sabbath-days.

Peculiar difficulties attend the discussion of the subject of the sabbath. If we take the strict and ultra ground of sabbath observance, basing it on the rigorous requirements of the fourth commandment, we take ground which is not true; and all untruth, whether it be an over-statement or a half-truth, recoils upon itself. If we impose on men a burden which can not be borne, and demand a strictness which, possible in theory, is impossible in practice, men recoil; we have asked too much, and they give us nothing—the result is an open, wanton, and sarcastic desecration of the Day of Rest.

If, on the other hand, we state the truth, that the sabbath is obsolete—a shadow which has passed—without modification or explanations, evidently there is a danger no less perilous. It is true to spiritual, false to unspiritual men; and a wide door is opened for abuse. And to recklessly loosen the hold of a nation on the sanctity of the Lord's day would be most mischievous—to do so willfully would be an act almost diabolical. For if we must choose between Puritan over-precision on the one hand, and on the other that laxity which, in many parts of the Continent, has marked the day from other days only by more riotous worldliness, and a more entire abandonment of the whole community to amusement, no Christian would hesitate: no English Christian, at least; to whom that day is hallowed by all that is endearing in early associations, and who feels how much it is the very bulwark of his country's moral purity.

Here, however, as in other cases, it is the half-truth which is dangerous—the other half is the corrective; the whole truth alone is safe. If we say the sabbath is shadow, this is only half the truth. The apostle adds, "the body is of Christ."

There is, then, in the sabbath that which is shadowy and that which is substantial; that which is transient and that which is permanent; that which is temporal and typical, and that which is eternal The shadow and the body.

Hence, a very natural and simple division of our subject suggests itself.

I. The transient shadow of the sabbath which has passed away.
II. The permanent substance which can not pass.

I. The transient shadow which has passed away.

The history of the sabbath-day is this. It was given by Moses to the Israelites, partly as a sign between God and them, marking them off from all other nations by its observance; partly as commemorative of their deliverance from Egypt. And the reason why the seventh day was fixed on, rather than the sixth or eighth was, that on that day God rested from His labor. The soul of man was to form itself on the model of the Spirit of God. It is not said, that God at the creation gave the sabbath to man, but that God rested at the close of the six days of creation: whereupon he had blessed and sanctified the seventh day to the Israelites. This is stated in the fourth commandment, and also in Gen. i., which was written for the Israelites; and the history of creation naturally and appropriately introduces the reason and the sanction of their day of rest.

Nor is there in the Old Testament a single trace of the observance of the sabbath before the time of Moses. After the Deluge, it is not mentioned in the covenant made with Noah. The first account of it occurs after the Israelites had left Egypt; and the fourth commandment consolidates it into a law, and explains the principle and sanctions of the institution. The observance of one day in seven, therefore, is purely Jewish. The Jewish obligation to observe it rested on the enactment given by Moses.

The spirit of its observance, too, is Jewish, and not Christian. There is a difference between the spirit of Judaism and that of Christianity. The spirit of Judaism is separation—that of Christianity is permeation. To separate the evil from the good was the aim and work of Judaism:—to sever one nation from all other nations; certain meats from other meat; certain days from other days. Sanctify means to set apart. The very essence of the idea of Hebrew holiness lay in sanctification in the sense of separation. On the contrary, Christianity is permeation—it permeates all evil with good—it aims at overcoming evil by good—it desires to transfuse the spirit of the day of rest into all other days, and to spread the holiness of one nation over all the world. To saturate life with God, and the world with Heaven, that is the genius of Christianity.

Accordingly, the observance of the sabbath was entirely in the Jewish spirit. No fire was permitted to be made on pain of death: Exod. xxxv. 3. No food was to be prepared: xvi. 5, 23. No buying nor selling: Nehem. x. 31. So rigorously was all this carried out, that a man gathering sticks was arraigned before the congregation, and sentenced to death by Moses.

This is Jewish, typical, shadowy;—it is all to pass away. Much already has passed: even those who believe our Lord's day to be the descendant of the sabbath admit this. The day is changed. The first day of the week has taken the place of the seventh. The computation of hours is altered. The Jews reckoned from sunset to sunset—modern Christians reckon from midnight to midnight. The spirit of its observance, too, is altered. No one contends now for Jewish strictness in its details.

Now observe, all this implies the abrogation of a great deal more—nay, of the whole Jewish sabbath itself. We have altered the day—the computation of the hours—the mode of observance: What remains to keep? Absolutely nothing of the literal portion except one day in seven: and that is abrogated, if the rest be abrogated. For by what right do we say that the order of the day, whether it be the first or the seventh, is a matter of indifference, because only formal, but that the proportion of days, one in seven, instead of one in eight or nine, is moral and unalterable? On what intelligible principle do we produce the fourth commandment as binding upon Christians, and abrogate so important a clause of it as, "In it thou shalt do no manner of work?" On what self-evident ground is it shown that the Jew might not light a fire, but the Christian may; yet that if the postal arrangements of a country permit the delivery of a letter, it is an infraction of the sabbath?

Unquestionably on no scriptural authority. Let those who demand a strict observance of the letter of scripture remember that the Jewish sabbath is distinctly enforced in the Bible, and nowhere in the Bible repealed. You have changed the seventh day to the first on no clear scriptural permission. Two or three passages tell us that, after the Resurrection, the apostles were found together on the first day of the week (which, by-the-way, may have been Saturday evening after sunset). But it is concluded that therefore *probably* the change was apostolic. You have only a probability to go on—and that probability, except with the aid of tradition, infinitesimally small—for the abrogation of a single iota of the Jewish fourth commandment.

It will be said, however, that works of necessity and works of mercy are excepted by Christ's example.

Tell us, then, ye who are servants of the letter, and yet do not scruple to use a carriage to convey you to some church where a favorite minister is heard, is that a spiritual necessity or a spiritual luxury? Part of the Sunday meal of all of you is the result of a servant's work. Tell us, then, ye accurate logicians, who say that nothing escapes the rigor of the prohibition which is not necessary or merciful, is a hot repast a work of necessity or a work of mercy? Oh! it rouses in every true soul a deep and earnest indignation to hear men who drive their cattle to church on Sundays, because they are too emasculated to trudge through cold and rain on foot, invoke the severity of an insulted Law of the Decalogue on those who provide facilities of movement for such as can not afford the luxury of a carriage. What think you, would He who blighted the Pharisees with such burning words, have said, had He been present by, while men, whose servants clean their houses, and prepare their meals, and harness their horses, stand up to denounce the service on some railway by which the poor are helped to health and enjoyment? Hired service for the rich is a necessity—hired service for the poor is a desecration of the sabbath! It is right that a thousand should toil for the few in private! It is past bearing in a Christian country that a few should toil for thousands on the sabbath-day!

There is only this alternative: if the fourth commandment be binding still, that clause is unrepealed—"no manner of work;" and so, too, is that other important part, the sanctification of the seventh day and not the first. If the fourth commandment be not binding in these points, then there is nothing left but the broad, comprehensive ground taken by the apostle. The whole sabbath is a shadow of things to come. In consistency, either hold that none of the formal part is abrogated, or else all. The whole of the letter of the commandment is moral, or else none.

II There is, however, in the sabbath a substance, a permanent something—"a body"—which can not pass away.

"The body is of Christ;" the spirit of Christ is the fulfillment of the law. To have the spirit of Christ is to have fulfilled the law. Let us hear the mind of Christ in this matter. "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." In that principle, rightly understood, lies the clue for the unravelling of the whole matter. The religionists of that day maintained that the necessities of man's nature must give way to the rigor of the enactment:—He taught that the enactment must yield to man's necessities. They said that the sabbath was written in the book of the Law; He said that it was written on man's nature, and that the law was merely meant to be in accordance with that nature. They based the obligation to observe the sabbath on the sacredness of an enactment; He on the sacredness of the nature of man.

An illustration will help us to perceive the difference between these two views. A wise physician prescribes a regimen of diet to a palate which has become diseased: he fixes what shall be eaten, the quantity, the hours, and number of times. On what does the obligation to obey rest? On the arbitrary authority of the physician? or on the nature with which that prescription is in accordance? When soundness and health are restored, the prescription falls into disuse: but the nature remains unalterable, which has made some things nutritious, others unwholesome, and excess forever pernicious. Thus the spirit of the prescription may be still in force when the prescriptive authority is repealed.

So Moses prescribed the sabbath to a nation spiritually diseased. He gave the regimen of rest to men who did not feel the need of spiritual rest. He fenced round his rule with precise regulations of details — one day in seven, no work, no fire, no traffic. On what does the obligation to obey it rest? On the authority of the rule? or on the necessities of that nature for which the rule was divinely adapted? Was man made for the sabbath, to obey it as a slave? or, Was the sabbath made for man? And when spiritual health has been restored, the Law regulating the details of rest may become obsolete; but the nature which demands rest never can be reversed.

Observe, now, that this is a far grander, safer, and more permanent basis on which to rest the sabbath than the mere enactment. For if you allege the fourth commandment as your authority, straightway you are met by the objection "no *manner* of work." Who gave you leave to alter that? And if you reply, works of necessity and works of mercy I may do, for Christ excepted these from the stringency of the rule, again the rejoinder comes, is there one in ten of the things that all Christians permit as lawful really a matter of necessity?

Whereas, if the sabbath rest on the needs of human nature, and we accept His decision that the sabbath was made for *man*, then you have an eternal ground to rest on from which you can not be shaken. A son of man may be lord of the sabbath-day, but he is not lord of his own nature. He can not make one hair white or black. You may abrogate the formal rule, but you can not abrogate the needs of your own soul. Eternal as the constitution of the soul of man is the necessity for the existence of a day of rest. Further still, on this ground alone can you find an impregnable defense of the *proportion*, one day in seven :—on the other ground it is unsafe. Having altered the seventh to the first, I know not why one in seven might not be altered to one in ten. The thing, however, has been tried ; and by the necessities of human nature the change has been found pernicious. One day in ten, prescribed by revolutionary France, was actually pronounced by physiologists insufficient. So that we begin to find that, in a deeper sense than we at first suspected, "the sabbath was made for man." Even in the contrivance of one day in seven, it was arranged by unerring wisdom. Just because the sabbath was made for man, and not because man was ordained to keep the sabbath-day, you can not tamper even with the iota, one day in seven.

That necessity on which the observance leans is the need of rest. It is the deepest want in the soul of man. If you take off covering after covering of the nature which wraps him round, till you come to the central heart of hearts, deep lodged there you find the requirement of repose. All men do not hanker after pleasure—all men do not crave intellectual food. But all men long for rest ; the most restless that ever pursued a turbulent career on earth did by that career only testify to the need of the soul within. They craved for something which was not given : there was a thirst which was not slaked : that very restlessness betokened that—restless because not at rest. It is this need which sometimes makes the quiet of the grave an object of such deep desire. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." It is this which creates the chief desirableness of heaven : "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." And it is this which, consciously or unconsciously, is the real wish that lies at the bottom of all others. Oh ! for tranquillity of heart—heaven's profound silence in the soul, " a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price !"

The rest needed by man is twofold. Physical repose of the body—a need which he shares with the animals through the lower nature which he has in common with them. "Thou shalt do no work, nor thy cattle,"—so far man's sabbath-need places him only on a level with the ox and with the ass.

But, besides this, the rest demanded is a repose of spirit. Between these two kinds of rest there is a very important difference. Bodily repose is simply inaction: the rest of the soul is exercise, not torpor. To do nothing is physical rest —to be engaged in full activity is the rest of the soul.

In that hour, which of all the twenty-four is most emblematical of heaven, and suggestive of repose, the eventide, in which instinctively Isaac went into the fields to meditate—when the work of the day is done, when the mind has ceased its tension, when the passions are lulled to rest in spite of themselves, by the spell of the quiet star-lit sky—it is then, amidst the silence of the lull of all the lower parts of our nature, that the soul comes forth to do its work. Then the peculiar, strange work of the soul, which the intellect can not do—meditation, begins. Awe, and worship, and wonder are in full exercise; and Love begins then in its purest form of mystic adoration and pervasive and undefined tenderness —separate from all that is coarse and earthly—swelling as if it would embrace the All in its desire to bless, and lose itself in the sea of the love of God. This is the rest of the soul—the *exercise* and play of all the nobler powers.

Two things are suggested by this thought.

First, the mode of the observance of the day of rest. It has become lately a subject of very considerable attention. Physiologists have demonstrated the necessity of cessation from toil: they have urged the impossibility of perpetual occupation without end. Pictures, with much pathos in them, have been placed before us, describing the hard fate of those on whom no sabbath dawns. It has been demanded as a right, entreated as a mercy, on behalf of the laboring man, that he should have one day in seven for recreation of his bodily energies. All well and true. But there is a great deal more than this. He who confines his conception of the need of rest to that, has left man on a level with the brutes. Let a man take merely lax and liberal notions of the fourth commandment—let him give his household and dependents immunity from toil, and wish for himself and them no more—he will find that there is a something wanting still. Experience tells us, after a trial, that those Sundays are the happiest, the purest, the most rich in blessing, in which the spiritual part has been most attended to—those in which the business letter was put aside till evening, and the profane literature not opened, and the ordinary occupations entirely suspended — those in which, as in the temple of Solomon, the sound of the earthly hammer has not been heard in the temple of the soul: for this is, in fact, the very distinction between the spirit of the Jewish sabbath and the spirit of the Christian Lord's day. The one is chiefly for the body—"Thou shalt do no manner of work." The other is principally for the soul—"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day."

The other truth suggested by that fact, that the repose of the soul is exercise, not rest, is, that it conveys an intimation of man's immortality. It is only when all the rest of our human nature is calmed that the spirit comes forth in full energy: all the rest tires, the spirit never tires. Humbleness, awe, adoration, love, these have in them no weariness: so that when this frame shall be dissolved into the dust of the earth, and the mind, which is merely fitted for this time-world, learning by experience, shall have been superseded, then, in the opening out of an endless career of love, the spirit will enter upon that sabbath of which all earthly sabbaths are but the shadow—the sabbath of eternity, the immortal rest of its Father's home.

Two observations, in concluding.

1. When is a son of man lord of the sabbath-day? To whom may the sabbath safely become a shadow? I reply, he that has the mind of Christ may exercise discretionary lordship over the sabbath-day. He who is in possession of the substance may let the shadow go. A man in health has done with the prescriptions of the physician. But for an unspiritual man to regulate his hours and amount of rest by his desires, is just as preposterous as for an unhealthy man to rule his appetites by his sensations. Win the mind of Christ; be like Him; and then, in the reality of rest in God, the sabbath form of rest will be superseded. Remain apart from Christ, and then you are under the law again; the fourth commandment is as necessary for you as it was for the Israelite—the prescriptive regimen which may discipline your soul to a sounder state. It is at his peril that the worldly man departs from the *rule* of the day of rest. Nothing can make us free from the law but the Spirit.

2. The rule pronounced by the apostle is a rule of liberty, and at the same time a rule of charity: "Let no man judge you in respect of the sabbath-days." It is very difficult to discuss this question of the sabbath. Heat, vehemence, acrimony, are substituted for argument. When you calmly ask to investigate the subject, men apply epithets, and call them reasons: they stigmatize you as a breaker of the sabbath, pronounce you "dangerous," with sundry warnings against you in private, and pregnant hints in public.

The apostle urges charity: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another man esteemeth every day alike." . . .

"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not." Carry out that spirit. In the detail of this question there is abundant difficulty. It is a question of degree. Some work must be done on the sabbath-day:—some must sacrifice their rest to the rest of others; for all human life is sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary.

Again, that which is rest to one man is not rest to another. To require the illiterate man to read his Bible for some hours would impose a toil upon him, though it might be a relaxation to you. To the laboring man a larger proportion of the day must be given to the recreation of his physical nature than is necessary for the man of leisure, to whom the spiritual observance of the day is easy, and seems all. Let us learn large, charitable considerateness. Let not the poor man sneer at his richer neighbor, if, in the exercise of his Christian liberty, he uses his horses to convey him to church and not to the mere drive of pleasure; but then, in fairness, let not the rich man be shocked and scandalized if the over-wearied shopkeeper and artisan breathe the fresh air of heaven with their families in the country. "The sabbath was made for man." Be generous, consistent, large-minded. A man may hold stiff, precise Jewish notions on this subject, but do not stigmatize that man as a formalist. Another may hold large, Paul-like views of the abrogation of the fourth commandment, and yet he may be sincerely and zealously anxious for the hallowing of the day in his household and through his country. Do not call that man a sabbath-breaker. Remember, the Pharisees called the Son of God a sabbath-breaker. They kept the law of the sabbath, they broke the law of love. Which was the worst to break? which was the higher law to keep? Take care lest, in the zeal which seems to you to be for Christ, *ye* be found indulging their spirit, and not His.

VII.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

"For we have not a high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv. 15, 16.

According to these verses, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is based upon the perfection of His humanity. Because tempted in all points like as we are, therefore He can show mercy, and grant help. Whatever destroys the conception of His humanity does in that same degree overthrow the notion of His priesthood.

Our subject is the Priestly Sympathies of Christ. But we make three preliminary observations.

The perfection of Christ's humanity implies that He was possessed of a human soul as well as a human body. There was a view held in early times, and condemned by the Church as a heresy, according to which the body of Christ was an external framework animated by Deity, as our bodies are animated by our souls. What the soul is to us, Deity was to Christ. His body was flesh, blood, bones—moved, guided, ruled by indwelling Divinity.

But you perceive at once that this destroys the notion of complete humanity. It is not this tabernacle of material elements which constitutes our humanity: you can not take that pale corpse from which life has fled, and call *that* man. And if Deity were to take up that form and make it its abode, that would not be a union of the Divine and Human. It would only be the union of Deity with certain materials that might have passed into man, or into an animal or an herb. Humanity implies a body and a soul.

Accordingly, in the life of Christ we find two distinct classes of feeling. When He hungered in the wilderness—when He thirsted on the cross—when He was weary by the well at Sychar—He experienced sensations which belong to the bodily department of human nature. But when out of twelve He selected one to be His bosom friend—when He looked round upon the crowd in anger—when the tears streamed down His cheeks at Bethany—and when He recoiled from the thought of approaching dissolution:—these—

grief, friendship, fear—were not the sensations of the body, much less were they the attributes of Godhead. They were the affections of an acutely sensitive human soul, alive to all the tenderness, and hopes, and anguish with which human life is filled, qualifying Him to be tempted *in all* points like as we are.

The second thought which presents itself is, that the Redeemer not only was, but *is* man. He *was* tempted in all points like us. He *is* a high-priest which can be touched. Our conceptions on this subject, from being vague, are often very erroneous. It is fancied that in the history of Jesus's existence, once, for a limited period and for definite purposes, He took part in frail humanity; but that when that purpose was accomplished, the Man forever perished, and the Spirit reascended, to unite again with pure unmixed Deity. But Scripture has taken peculiar pains to give assurance of the continuance of His humanity. It has carefully recorded His resurrection. After that He passed through space from spot to spot: when He was in one place He was not in another. His body was sustained by the ordinary aliments—broiled fish and honeycomb. The prints of suffering were on Him. His recognitions were human still. Thomas and Peter were especially reminded of incidents before His death, and connected with His living interests. To Thomas He says—"Reach hither thy hand." To Peter—"Lovest thou me?"

And this typifies to us a very grand and important truth. It is this, if I may venture so to express myself—the truth of the human heart of God. We think of God as a Spirit, infinitely removed from and unlike the creatures He has made. But the truth is, man resembles God: all spirits, all minds, are of the same family. The Father bears a likeness to the Son whom He has created. The mind of God is similar to the mind of man. Love does not mean one thing in man, and another thing in God. Holiness, justice, pity, tenderness—these are in the Eternal the same in kind which they are in the finite being. The present manhood of Christ conveys this deeply important truth, that the Divine heart is human in its sympathies.

The third observation upon these verses is, that there is a connection between what Jesus was and what Jesus is. He can be touched now, *because* He was tempted then. The incidents and the feelings of that part of the existence which is gone have not passed away without results which are deeply entwined with His present being. His past experience has left certain effects durable in His nature as it is now. It has endued Him with certain qualifications and certain susceptibilities, which He would not have had but for that experience. Just as the results remained upon His body, the prints of the nails in His palms, and the spear-gash in His side, so do the results remain upon His soul, enduing Him with a certain susceptibility, for "He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" with certain qualifications, for "He is able to show mercy, and to impart grace to help in time of need."

To turn now to the subject itself. It has two branches.

I. The Redeemer's preparation for His priesthood.
II. The Redeemer's priestly qualifications.

I. His preparation. The preparation consisted in being tempted. But here a difficulty arises. Temptation, as applied to a Being perfectly free from tendencies to evil, is not easy to understand. See what the difficulty is. Temptation has two senses: It means test or probation; it means also trial, involving the idea of pain or danger. A common acid applied to gold tests it, but there is no risk or danger to the most delicate golden ornament. There is one acid, and only one, which tries it, as well as tests it. The same acid applied to a shell endangers the delicacy of its surface. A weight hung from a bar of iron only tests its strength; the same, depending from a human arm, is a trial, involving, it may be, the risk of pain or fracture. Now trial placed before a sinless being is intelligible enough in the sense of probation—it is a test of excellence: but it is not easy to see how it can be temptation in the sense of pain, if there be no inclination to do wrong.

However, Scripture plainly asserts this as the character of Christ's temptation. Not merely test, but trial.

First, you have passages declaring the immaculate nature of His mind—as here, "without sin." Again, He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And again, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." The spirit of evil found nothing which it could claim as its own in Christ. It was the meeting of two elements which will not amalgamate. Oil and water could as easily blend, as the mind of Christ with evil. Temptation glanced from His heart as the steel point does from the surface of the diamond. It was not that evil propensities were kept under by the power of the Spirit in Him:—He had no evil propensities at all. Obedience was natural to Him.

But then we find another class of passages such as this: "He *suffered*, being tempted." There was not merely test in the temptation, but there was also painfulness in the victory How could this be without any tendency to evil?

To answer this, let us analyze sin. In every act of sin there are two distinct steps: There is the rising of a desire which is natural, and, being natural, is not wrong: there is the indulgence of that desire in forbidden circumstances; and that is sin. Let injury, for example, be inflicted, and resentment will arise. It must arise spontaneously. It is as impossible for injustice to be done, and resentment not to follow, as it is for the flesh not to quiver on the application of intense torture. Resentment is but the sense of injustice, made more vivid by its being brought home to ourselves; resentment is beyond our control, so far. There is no sin in this: but let resentment rest there; let it pass into, not justice, but revenge; let it smoulder in vindictive feeling till it becomes retaliation, and then a natural feeling has grown into a transgression. You have the distinction between these two things clearly marked in Scripture. "Be ye angry"—here is the allowance for the human, "and sin not"—here is the point where resentment passes into retaliation.

Again, take the natural sensation of hunger. Let a man have been without food: let the gratification present itself, and the natural desire will arise involuntarily. It will arise just as certainly in a forbidden as in a permitted circumstance. It will arise whether what he looks on be the bread of another or his own. And it is not here, in the sensation of hunger, that the guilt lies. But it lies in the willful gratification of it after it is known to be forbidden.

This was literally one of the cases in which Christ was tried. The wish for food was in His nature in the wilderness. The very mode of gratifying it was presented to His imagination, by using Divine power in an unlawful way. And had He so been constituted that the lower wish was superior to the higher will, there would have been an act of sin; had the two been nearly balanced, so that the conflict hung in doubt, there would have been a tendency to sin: what we call a sinful nature. But it was in the entire and perfect subjugation of desire to the will of right that a sinless nature was exhibited.

Here then is the nature of sin. Sin is not the possession of desires, but the having them in uncontrolled ascendency over the higher nature. Sinfulness does not consist in having *strong* desires or passions: in the strongest and highest natures, all, including the desires, is strong. Sin is not a real *thing*. It is rather the absence of a something, the will to do right. It is not a disease or taint, an actual substance projected into the constitution. It is the absence of the spirit which orders and harmonizes the whole; so that what we mean when we say the natural man must sin inevitably, is this, that he has strong natural appetites, and that he has no bias from above to counteract those appetites: exactly as if a ship were deserted by the crew, and left on the bosom of the Atlantic with every sail set and the wind blowing. No one forces her to destruction, yet on the rocks she will surely go, just because there is no pilot at the helm. Such is the state of ordinary men. Temptation leads to fall. The gusts of instincts, which rightly guided would have carried safely into port, dash them on the rocks. No one forces them to sin; but the spirit-pilot has left the helm.—[Fallen Nature.]

Sin, therefore, is not in the appetites, but in the absence of a controlling will.

Now contrast this state with the state of Christ. There were in Him all the natural appetites of mind and body. Relaxation and friendship were dear to Him—so were sunlight and life. Hunger, pain, death—He could feel all, and shrunk from them. Conceive, then, a case in which the gratification of any one of these inclinations was inconsistent with His Father's will. At one moment it was unlawful to eat, though hungry: and without one tendency to disobey, did fasting cease to be severe? It was demanded that he should endure anguish; and willingly as He subdued Himself, did pain cease to be pain? Could the spirit of obedience reverse every feeling in human nature? When the brave man gives his shattered arm to the surgeon's knife, will may prevent even the quiver of an eyelid, but no will and no courage can reverse his sensations, or prevent the operation from inflicting pain. When the heart is raw, and smarting from recent bereavement, let there be the deepest and most reverential submission to the highest Will, is it possible not to wince? Can any cant demand for submission extort the profession that pain is pleasure?

It seems to have been in this way that the temptation of Christ caused suffering. He suffered from the force of desire. Though there was no hesitation whether to obey or not, no strife in the will, in the act of mastery there was pain. There was self-denial—there was obedience at the expense of tortured natural feeling. He shrunk from St. Peter's suggestion of escape from ignominy as from a thing which did not shake His determination, but made Him feel, in the idea of bright life, vividly the cost of His resolve. "Get thee behind me, tempter, for thou art an offense." In the garden, unswervingly, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." There was no reluctance in the *will.* But was there no struggling—no shudder in the inward sensations—no re membrance that the Cross was sharp—no recollection of the family at Bethany, and the pleasant walk, and the dear companionship which He was about to leave? "My soul is exceeding sorrowful to die." . . . .

So that in every one of these cases—not by the reluctancy of a sinful sensation, but by the quivering and the anguish of natural feeling when it is trampled upon by lofty will—Jesus *suffered*, being tempted. He was "tempted like as we are." Remember this. For the way in which some speak of the sinlessness of Jesus reduces all His suffering to physical pain, destroys the reality of temptation, reduces that glorious heart to a pretense, and converts the whole of His history into a mere fictitious drama, in which scenes of trial were only represented, not really felt. Remember that, "in all points," the Redeemer's *soul* was tempted.

II. The second point we take is the Redeemer's priesthood.

Priesthood is that office by which He is the medium of union between man and God. The capacity for this has been indelibly engraven on His nature by His experience here. All this capacity is based on His sympathy: He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Till we have reflected on it, we are scarcely aware how much the sum of human happiness in the world is indebted to this one feeling—sympathy. We get cheerfulness and vigor, we scarcely know how or when, from mere association with our fellow-men; and from the looks reflected on us of gladness and employment, we catch inspiration and power to go on, from human presence and from cheerful looks. The workman works with added energy from having others by. The full family circle has a strength and a life peculiarly its own. The substantial good and the effectual relief which men extend to one another is trifling. It is not by these, but by something far less costly, that the work is done. God has insured it by a much more simple machinery. He has given to the weakest and the poorest, power to contribute largely to the common stock of gladness. The child's smile and laugh are mighty powers in this world. When bereavement has left you desolate, what substantial benefit is there which makes condolence acceptable? It can not replace the loved ones you have lost. It can bestow upon you nothing permanent. But a warm hand has touched yours, and its thrill told you that there was a living response there to your emotion. One look, one human sigh has done more for you than the costliest present could convey.

And it is for want of remarking this that the effect of public charity falls often so far short of the expectations of those who give. The springs of men's generosity are dried up by hearing of the repining, and the envy, and the discontent which have been sown by the general collection and the provision establishment, among cottages where all was harmony before. The famine and the pestilence are met by abundant liberality; and the apparent return for this is riot and sedition. But the secret lies all in this. It is not in channels such as these that the heart's gratitude can flow. Love is not bought by money, but by love. There has been all the machinery of a public distribution: but there has been no exhibition of individual, personal interest. The rich man who goes to his poor brother's cottage, and without affectation of humility, naturally, and with the respect which man owes to man, enters into his circumstances, inquiring about his distresses, and hears his homely tale, has done more to establish an interchange of kindly feeling than he could have secured by the costliest present by itself. Public donations have their value and their uses. Poor-laws keep human beings from starvation: but in the point of eliciting gratitude, all these fail. Man has not been brought into contact close enough with man for this. They do not work by sympathy.

Again, when the electric touch of sympathetic feeling has gone among a mass of men, it communicates itself, and is reflected back from every individual in the crowd, with a force exactly proportioned to their numbers. The speech or sermon read before the limited circle of a family, and the same discourse uttered before closely crowded hundreds, are two different things. There is strange power even in the mere presence of a common crowd, exciting almost uncontrollable emotion.

It is on record that the hard heart of an Oriental conqueror was unmanned by the sight of a dense mass of living millions engaged in one enterprise. He accounted for it by saying that it suggested to him that within a single century not one of those millions would be alive. But the hard-hearted bosom of the tyrant mistook its own emotions; his tears came from no such far-fetched inference of reflection: they rose spontaneously, as they will rise in a dense crowd, you can not tell why. It is the thrilling thought of numbers engaged in the same object. It is the idea of our own feelings reciprocated back to us, and reflected from many hearts. It is the mighty presence of life.

And again, it seems partly to avail itself of this tendency within us that such stress is laid on the injunction of united prayer. Private devotion is essential to the spiritual life—without it there is no life. But it can not replace united prayer, for the two things have different aims. Solitary prayer is feeble in comparison with that which rises before the throne echoed by the hearts of hundreds, and strengthened by the feeling that other aspirations are mingling with our own. And whether it be the chanted litany, or the more simply read service, or the anthem producing one emotion at the same moment in many bosoms, the value and the power of public prayer seem chiefly to depend on this mysterious affection of our nature—sympathy.

And now, having endeavored to illustrate this power of sympathy, it is for us to remember that of this in its fullness He is susceptible. There is a vague way of speaking of the Atonement which does not realize the tender, affectionate, personal love by which that daily, hourly reconciliation is effected. The sympathy of Christ was not merely love of men in masses: He loved the masses, but he loved them because made up of individuals. He "had compassion on the multitude;" but He had also discriminating, special tenderness for erring Peter and erring Thomas. He felt for the despised lonely Zaccheus in his sycamore-tree. He compassionated the discomfort of His disciples. He mixed His tears with the stifled sobs by the grave of Lazarus. He called the abashed children to His side. Amongst the numbers, as He walked, He detected the individual touch of faith. "Master, the multitude throng thee, and sayest thou, *Who* touched me?"—"Somebody hath touched me."

Observe how he is *touched* by our infirmities—with a separate, special, discriminating love. There is not a single throb, in a single human bosom, that does not thrill at once with more than electric speed up to the mighty heart of God. *You* have not shed a tear or sighed a sigh that did not come back to you exalted and purified by having passed through the Eternal bosom.

The priestly powers conveyed by this faculty of sympathizing, according to the text are two: the power of mercy, and the power of having grace to help. "Therefore"—because He can be touched—"let us come boldly," expecting mercy—and grace.

1. We may boldly expect mercy from Him who has learned to sympathize. He learned sympathy by being tempted: but it is by being tempted, yet without sin, that He is specially able to show mercy.

There are two who are unfit for showing mercy: He who has never been tried; and he who, having been tempted, has fallen under temptation. The young, untempted, and upright, are often severe judges. They are for sanguinary punishment: they are for expelling offenders from the bosom of society. The old, on the contrary, who have fallen much, are lenient; but it is a leniency which often talks thus: Men must be men—a young man must sow his wild oats and reform.

So young ardent Saul, untried by doubt, persecuted the Christians with severity; and Saul the king, on the contrary, having fallen himself, weakly permitted Agag to escape punishment. David, again, when his own sin was narrated to him under another name, was unrelenting in his indignation: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

None of these were qualified for showing mercy aright. Now this qualification "without sin" is very remarkable; for it is the one we often least should think of. Unthinkingly we should say that to have erred would make a man lenient: it is not so.

That truth is taught with deep significance in one of the incidents of the Redeemer's life. There stood in His presence a tempted woman, covered with the confusion of recent conviction. And there stood beside her the sanctimonious religionists of that day, waiting like hell-hounds to be let loose upon their prey. Calm words came from the lips of Him "who spake as man never spake," and whose heart felt as man never felt. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone." A memorable lesson of eternal truth. Sinners are not fit to judge of sin: their justice is revenge—their mercy is feebleness. He alone can judge of sin—he alone can attemper the sense of what is due to the offended law with the remembrance of that which is due to human frailty—he alone is fit for showing manly mercy, who has, like his Master, felt the power of temptation in its might, and come scathless through the trial. "In all points tempted—*yet without sin*;" therefore, to Him you may "boldly go to find mercy."

2. The other priestly power is the grace of showing "help in time of need."

We must not make too much of sympathy, as mere feeling. We do in things spiritual as we do with hot-house plants. The feeble exotic, beautiful to look at, but useless, has costly sums spent on it. The hardy oak, a nation's strength, is permitted to grow, scarcely observed, in the fence and copses. We prize feeling and praise its possessor. But feeling is only a sickly exotic in itself—a passive quality, having in it nothing moral, no temptation and no victory. A man is no more a good man for having feeling, than he is for having a delicate ear for music, or a far-seeing optic nerve. The Son of man had feeling—He could be "touched." The tear would start from His eyes at the sight of human sorrow. But that sympathy was no exotic in His soul, beautiful to look at, too delicate for use. Feeling with Him led to this, "He went about doing good." Sympathy with Him was this, "Grace to help in time of need."

And this is the blessing of the thought of Divine sympathy. By the sympathy of man, after all, the wound is not healed; it is only stanched for a time. It can make the tear flow less bitterly: it can not dry it up. So far as permanent good goes, who has not felt the deep truth which Job taught his friends—"Miserable comforters are ye all?"

The sympathy of the Divine Human! He knows what strength is needed. He gives grace to help; and when the world, with its thousand forms of temptation, seems to whisper to us as to Esau, Sell me thy birthright, the other voice speaks, Shall I barter blessedness for happiness—the inward peace for the outward thrill—the benediction of my Father for a mess of pottage? There are moments when we seem to tread above this earth, superior to its allurements, able to do without its kindness, firmly bracing ourselves to do our work as He did His. Those moments are not the sunshine of life. They did not come when the world would have said that all round you was glad: but it was when outward trials had shaken the soul to its very centre, then there came from Him "grace to help in time of need."

1. He who would sympathize must be content to be tried and tempted. There is a hard and boisterous rudeness in our hearts by nature which requires to be softened down. We pass by suffering gayly, carelessly, not in cruelty, but unfeelingly, just because we do not know what suffering is. We wound men by our looks and our abrupt expressions without intending it, because we have not been taught the delicacy, and the tact, and the gentleness which can only be learnt by the wounding of our own sensibilities. There is a haughty feeling in uprightness which has never been on the verge of fall that requires humbling. There is an inability to enter into difficulties of thought which marks the mind to which all things have been presented superficially, and which has never experienced the horror of feeling the ice of doubt crashing beneath the feet.

Therefore, if you aspire to be a son of consolation—if you would partake of the priestly gift of sympathy—if you would pour something beyond commonplace consolation into a tempted heart—if you would pass through the intercourse of daily life with the delicate tact which never inflicts pain—if to that most acute of human ailments, mental doubt, you are ever to give effectual succor, you must be content to pay the price of the costly education. Like Him, you must suffer—being tempted.

But remember, it is being tempted in all points, *yet without* sin, that makes sympathy real, manly, perfect, instead of a mere sentimental tenderness. Sin will teach you to *feel* for trials. It will not enable you to judge them, to be merciful to them, nor to help them in time of need with any certainty.

Lastly, it is this same human sympathy which qualifies Christ for judgment. It is written that the Father hath committed all judgment to Him, because He is the Son of Man. The sympathy of Christ extends to the frailties of human nature, not to its hardened guilt: He is "touched with the feeling of our *infirmities.*" There is nothing in His bosom which can harmonize with malice; He can not feel for envy; He has no fellow-feeling for cruelty—oppression—hypocrisy; bitter censorious judgments. Remember, He could look round about Him with anger. The sympathy of Christ is a comforting subject. It is, besides, a tremendous subject; for on sympathy the awards of heaven and hell are built. "Except a man be born again"—not he *shall* not, but—"he *can not* enter into heaven." There is nothing in him which has affinity to any thing in the Judge's bosom. A sympathy for that which is pure implies a repulsion of that which is impure. Hatred of evil is in proportion to the strength of love for good. To love good intensely is to hate evil intensely. It was in strict accordance with the laws of sympathy that He blighted Pharisaism in such ungentle words as these: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Win the mind of Christ now—or else His sympathy for human nature will not save you from, but only insure, the recoil of abhorrence at the last—"Depart from me! I never knew you."

VIII.

THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES AT JOHN'S BAPTISM.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"—Matt. iii. 7.

It seems that the Baptist's ministry had been attended with almost incredible success, as if the population of the country had been roused in mass by the tidings of his doctrine. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

The success of his ministry was tested by the numbers that he baptized. Not so a modern ministry. Ministerial success is not shown now by the numbers who listen. Not mere impression, but altered character, marks success. Not by startling nor by electrifying congregations, but by turning men from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, is the work done. With John, however, it was different. He was on earth to do a special work—the work of the axe, not the trowel; to throw down, not to build; to startle, not to instruct; and therefore his baptism was simply symbolized by water, the washing away of the past: whereas that of Christ was symbolized by fire, the touching of the life and heart with the living flame of a heavenlier life. Whoever, therefore, came to John for baptism, possessed conviction of the truth of that which John taught, and thereby so far tested the fidelity and success of his ministry.

Bearing, then, in mind that coming to John's baptism was the seal of his success, and that his baptism contained, in symbolical form, the whole substance of his teaching, these are the two topics of the text:

I. The meaning wrapped up in John's message.
II. The Baptist's astonishment at his own success.

I. The meaning of John's message. His baptism implied to those who came to put themselves under its protection that they were in danger, for it was connected with the warning, "Flee from the wrath to come!"

Future retribution has become to us a kind of figment. Hell is in the world of shadows. The tone in which educated men speak of it still, is often only that good-humored condescension which makes allowance for childish superstition.

Part of this incredulity arises from the confessedly symbolical intimations of Scripture on the subject. We read of the fire and the worm—of spirits being salted with fire—of a lake of fire and brimstone. All this tells solely of physical suffering. And accordingly, for centuries this was the predominant conception of Christendom on the subject. Scarcely any other element was admitted. Whoever has seen those paintings on which the master-spirits in Art have thrown down the conceptions of their age, will remember that hideous demons, distorted countenances, and waves of flame represent the whole idea. And in that immortal work in which he who sang of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven has embodied the belief of his day, still the same fact prevails. You read of the victims of unchaste life hurried on the dark whirlwind forever; of the heretics in their coffins of intense fire, and of the guilty spirits who are plunged deep down in "thick-ribbed ice." But in those harrowing pictures which his genius has painted with such vividness, there is not one idea of mental suffering embodied. It is all bodily—awful, intolerable torture. Now all this we believe no longer. The circles of hell and the mountain of purgatory are as fabulous to us as the Tartarus of the heathens. Singular that in an age in which the chief aim of science appears to be to get rid of physical pain and discomfort, as if these were the worst evils conceivable, the idea of a bodily hell should be just the one at which we have learnt to smile. But with the form, we have also dispossessed ourselves of belief in the reality of retribution at all.

Now Scripture language is symbolical. There is no salt, no worm, no fire to torture. I say not that a diseased soul may not form for itself a tenement hereafter, as here, peculiarly fitted to be the avenue of suffering; but unquestionably we can not build upon these expressions a material hell.

Hell is the infinite terror of the soul, whatever that may be. To one man it is pain. Rid him of that, he can bear all degradation. To another it is public shame. Save him from that, and he will creep and crawl before you to submit to any reptile meanness. "Honor me now, I pray thee, before the people," cries Saul, till Samuel turns from the abject thing in scorn. To others, the infinite terror is *that* compared with which all these would be a bed of roses. It is the hell of having done wrong—the hell of having had a spirit from God, pure, with high aspirations, and to be conscious of having dulled its delicacy and degraded its desires—the hell of having quenched a light brighter than the sun's—of having done to another an injury that through time and through eternity never can be undone—infinite, maddening remorse —the hell of knowing that every chance of excellence, and every opportunity of good, has been lost forever. This is the infinite terror; this is wrath to come.

You doubt that? Have you ever marked that striking fact, the connection of the successive stages of the soul? How sin can change the countenance, undermine the health, produce restlessness? Think you the grave will end all that —that by some magic change the moral being shall be buried there, and the soul rise again so changed in every feeling that the very identity of being would be lost, and it would amount to the creation of a new soul? Say you that God is love? Oh, but look round this world. The aspect of things is stern—very stern. If they be ruled by love, it is a love which does not shrink from human agony. There is a law of infinite mercy here, but there is a law of boundless rigor too. Sin, and you will suffer—that law is not reversed. The young, and the gentle, and the tender, are inexorably subjected to it. We would shield them if we could, but there is that which says they shall not be shielded. They shall weep, and fade, and taste of mortal anguish, even as others. Carry that out into the next world, and you have "wrath to come."

John's baptism, besides, implied the importance of confession. "They were baptized, ... confessing their sins." On the eve of a promised new life, they were required to acknowledge the iniquity of their past life. In the cure of our spiritual maladies there is a wondrous efficacy, to use a homely phrase, in making a "clean breast." There is something strengthening, something soothing, and at the same time something humbling, in acknowledging that we have done wrong. There is a pride in us which can not bear pity. There is a diseased sensitiveness which shrinks from the smart of acknowledgment; and yet that smart must be borne before we can be truly soothed. When was it that the younger son in the parable received the ring, and the robe, and the banquet, which represent the rapture of the sense of being forgiven? When he had fortitude enough to go back, mile by mile, step by step, every inch of the way he had gone wrong, had borne unflinchingly the sneer of his father's domestics, and, worse than all, the sarcasms of his immaculate brother, and manfully said out, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." When was it that the publican went down *justified* to his house—when he said, even before a supercilious Pharisee, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" When did the royal delinquent hear the words, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin?" When he gave the sacrifice of his lips—"I have sinned before the Lord." And when did the Church of Ephesus rise into the brightest model of a perfect church that has yet been exhibited on earth? After her converts had publicly come forward, burnt those manuscripts which were called "Ephesian letters" to the value of 50,000 pieces of silver, "confessed and showed their deeds."

There is a profound truth in the popular anxiety that a murderer should confess before he dies. It is an instinctive feeling that a true death is better than a false life—that to die with unacknowledged guilt is a kind of lie. To acknowledge his sin is to put it from him—to abjure it—to refuse to acknowledge it as part of himself—to separate it from him—to say, I will keep it as mine no more: then it is gone. Who here has a secret of guilt lying like lead upon his heart? As he values serenity of soul, let that secret be made known. And if there be one to-day who is impressed or touched by all this, let him beware how he procrastinates that which was done when John baptized. The iron that once was cooled may never be warmed again—the heart that once had its flood-gates open, and has delayed to pour out the stagnation of its wretchedness, may be closed forever.

Once more, John's baptism implied the necessity of a renewal of heart. We lose part of the significance of that ceremony from its transplantation away from a climate in which it was natural and appropriate.

Ablution in the East is almost a religious duty: the dust and heat weigh upon the spirits and heart like a load; the removal is refreshment and happiness. And it was impossible to see that significant act—in which the convert went down into the water, travel-worn and soiled with dust, disappeared for one moment, and then emerged pure and fresh—without feeling that the symbol answered to, and interpreted a strong craving of the human heart. It is the desire to wash away that which is past and evil. We would fain go to another country and begin life afresh. We look upon the grave almost with complacency, from the fancy that there we shall lie down to sleep and wake fresh and new. It was this same longing that expressed itself in heathenism by the fabled river of forgetfulness, of which the dead must drink before they can enter into rest.

Now to that craving John gave reality and meaning when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" For else that craving is but a sick fond wish. Had John merely said, "Flee from the wrath to come!" he would have filled man's life with the terrors of anticipated hell. Had he only said, "My baptism implies that ye must be pure," he would have crushed men's hearts with the feeling of impossibility; for excellence without Christ is but a dream. He gave meaning and promise to all when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

Sin-laden and guilty men—the end of all the Christian ministry is to say that out with power, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Divine life and death! to have had one glimpse of which, with its ennobling impulses, it were worth while to have endured a life of suffering. When we believe that the sacrifice of that Lamb meant love to us, our hearts are lightened of their load: the past becomes as nothing, and life begins afresh. Christ is the river of forgetfulness in which bygone guilt is overwhelmed.

II. The Baptist's astonishment at his own success. It was a singular scene which was exhibited in those days on the banks of Jordan. There was a crowd of human beings, each having a history of his own—men who have long mouldered in earth's dust, but who were living then in fresh and vigorous existence. Think of it. Busy life was moving there—beings who had their hopes and fears about time and eternity, to whom life was dear as it is to us at this day. They had come to be cured of that worst of human maladies, the aching of a hollow heart; and a single mortified man was bending over them, whose countenance bore all that peculiar aspect of saintliness which comes from spare diet and austere habits, and all that unruffled composure which comes from lonely communings with God:—a solitary man, who had led a hermit's life, but was possessed of rare sagacity in worldly matters;—for, hermit as he was, John took no half-views of men and things: there was nothing morbid in his view of life; there was sound common sense in the advice he gave the different classes which came to him. "Repent," with him, did not mean, Come with me into the wilderness to live away from the world, but it meant this: Go back to the world, and live above it, each doing his work in an unworldly spirit. It was a strange spectacle, men of the world coming with implicit reverence to learn the duties of active life from a man whose world was the desert, and who knew nothing of active life except by hearsay.

Now what was the secret of this power by which he chained the hearts of men as by a spell?

One point in the secret of this success was a thing which we see every day. Men of thought and quiet contemplation exercise a wonderful influence over men of action. We admire that which we are not ourselves. The man of business owns the control of the man of religious thoughtfulness. Like coalesces in this world with unlike. The strong and the weak, the contemplative and the active, bind themselves together. They are necessary for each other. The active soldiers and the scheming publicans came to the lonely, ascetic John to hear something of that still, inner life, of which their own career could tell them nothing.

A second cause of this success appears to have been that it was a ministry of terror. Fear has a peculiar fascination. As children love the tale of the supernatural which yet makes them shudder, so do men, as it would seem, find a delight in the pictures of eternal woe which terrify them—partly from the pleasure which there is in vivid emotions, and partly, perhaps, from a kind of feeling of expiation in the horror which is experienced. You could not go among the dullest set of rustics and preach graphically and terribly of hell-fire without insuring a large audience. The preaching of John in this respect differed from the tone of Christ's. Christ taught much that God is love. He spoke a great deal of the Father which is in heaven. He instructed in those parables which required thoughtful attention, exercise of mind, and a gently sensitive conscience. He spoke didactic, calm discourses, very engaging, but with little excitement in them: such discourses as the Sermon on the Mount, respecting goodness, purity, duties; which assuredly, if any one were to venture so to speak before a modern congregation, would be stigmatized as a moral essay. Accordingly His success was much less marked than that of John's. No crowds were baptized as His followers: one hundred and twenty, in an upper chamber, appear to have been the fruits of his lifework. To teach so, is assuredly not the way to make strong impressions; but it is the way to work deeply, gloriously—for eternity. How many of John's terrified Pharisees and Sadducees, suppose we, retained the impression six months?

What is your religion? Excitability, romance, impression, fear? Remember, excitement has its uses, impression has its value. John, in all circumstances of his appearance and style of teaching, impressed by excitement. Excitement, warmed feelings, make the first actings of religious life and the breaking of inveterate habits easier. But excitement and impres sion are not religion. Neither can you trust to the alarm produced by the thought of eternal retribution. Ye that have been impressed, beware how you let those impressions die away. Die they will, and must: we can not live in excitement forever; but beware of their leaving behind them nothing except a languid, jaded heart. If God ever gave you the excitements of religion, breaking in upon your monotony, as John's teaching broke in upon that of Jerusalem, take care. There is no restoring of elasticity to the spring that has been overbent. Let impression pass on at once to acting.

We have another cause to assign for John's success. Men felt that he was real. Reality is the secret of all success. Religion in Jerusalem had long become a thing of forms. Men had settled into a routine of externals, as if all religion centred in these. Decencies and proprieties formed the substance of human life. And here was a man in God's world once more who felt that religion is an everlasting reality. Here was a man once more to tell the world that life is sliding into the abyss—that all we see is but a shadow—that the invisible Life within is the only real life. Here was a man who could feel the splendors of God shining into his soul in the desert without the aid of forms. His locust-food, his hair-garment, his indifference to earthly comforts, spoke out once more that one at least could make it a conviction to live and die upon, that man does not live on bread alone, but on the Living Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. And when that crowd dispersed at sunset, and John was left alone in the twilight, with the infinite of darkness deepening round him, and the roll of Jordan by his side, reflecting the chaste, clear stars, there was something there higher than Pharisaic forms to speak to him; there was heaven and eternity to force him to be real. This life was swiftly passing. What is it to a man living like John but a show and a dream? He was homeless upon earth. Well, but beyond—beyond—in the blue eternities above, there was the prophet's home. He had cut himself off from the solaces of life. He was to make an enemy of the man of honor, Herod. He had made an enemy of the man of religion, the Pharisee. But he was passing into that country where it matters little whether a man has been clothed in finest linen or in coarsest camel's hair: that still country, where the struggle-storm of life is over, and such as John find their rest at last in the home of God, which is reserved for the true and brave. If perpetual familiarity with such thoughts as these can not make a man real, there is nothing in this world that can.

And now look at this man, so disciplined. Life to John was a reality. The citizens of Jerusalem could not go to him, as they might have gone to the schools of their rabbis, for learned subtleties, or to the groves of Athenian literature for melting imagery. Speech falls from him sharp—rugged—cutting:—a word, and no more. "Repent!"—"wrath to come." "The axe is laid at the root of the trees." "Fruitless trees will be cast into the fire." He spoke as men speak when they are in earnest, simply and abruptly, as if the graces of oratory were out of place. And then, that life of his! The world could understand it. There was written on it, in letters that needed no magnifying-glass to read, "Not of this world."

It is, after all, this which tells—the reality of unworldliness. The world is looking on to see what religious people mean. It has a most profound contempt for unreality. Such a man as John comes before them. Well, we understand that:—we do not like him: get him out of the way, and kill him if he interferes with us—but it is genuine. They then turn and see other men drawing ingenious distinctions between one kind of amusement and another—indulging themselves on the sabbath-day and condemning others who do similar things, and calling that unworldliness. They see that a religious man has a shrewd eye to his interests—is quick at making a bargain—captivated by show and ostentation—affects titled society. The world is very keen-sighted: it looks through the excitement of your religious meetings, quietly watches the rest of your scandal, scans your consciousness, and the question which the world keeps putting pertinaciously is, Are these men in earnest? Is it any marvel if Christian unreality is the subject of scoffs and bitter irony?

Let men see that you are real—inconsistent, it may be, sinful: oh, full of sin, impetuous, hasty, perhaps stern—John was. But compel them to feel that you are in earnest. This is the secret of influence.

So much, then, for the causes of success. Now let us analyze that success a little more closely, by considering the classes of men on whom that influence told.

First of all, we read of soldiers, publicans, and the poor people, coming to John for advice, and with the acknowledgment of guilt, and we do not read that their arrival excited the smallest emotion of astonishment in John's bosom. The wonder was not *there*. No wonder that the poor, whose lot in this world is hard, should look wistfully for another. No wonder that soldiers, with their prompt habits of obedience and their perpetual opportunities of self devotion, should recognize with reverence the type of heroic life which John presented. No wonder that the guilty publicans should come for purification of heart. For is it not true that the world's outcasts may be led by their very sin to Christ? It is no wonder to see a saddened sinner seeking in the disappointment and weariness of solitary age that which he rejected in the heat of youth. Why, even the world is not astonished when it sees the sinner become the saint. Of course, the world has its own sarcastic account to give. Dissipation leads to weariness, and weariness to satiety, and satiety to devotion, and so your great sinner becomes a great saint, and serves God when all his emotions are exhausted. Be it so. He who knew our nature well, knew that marvellous revolutions go on in the soul of a man whom the world counts lost. In our wildest wanderings there is sometimes a love, strong as a father's, tender as a mother's, watching over us, and bringing back the erring child again. Know you not the law of Nature? Have you never seen how out of chaos and ferment Nature brings order again — life out of death, beauty out of corruption? Such, gainsay it who will, often is the history of the rise of saintliness and purity out of a disappointed, bruised, and penitent spirit. When the life-hopes have become a wreck —when the cravings of the heart for keen excitement have been ministered to so abundantly as to leave nothing but loathing and self-reproach behind—when innocence of heart is gone—yes, even then—scoff who will—the voice of Him is heard, who so dearly purchased the right to say it: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

John was not surprised that such came to him, owning the power of life-giving truth.

But among those who came, there were two classes who did move him to marvel. The first was the moral, self-satisfied formalist. The second was the calm, metaphysical, reasoning infidel. When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, he said: "Who hath warned *you?*" Now who were these men?

The Pharisees were men who rested satisfied with the outward. The form of religion, which varies in all ages, *that* they wanted to stereotype. The inner heart of religion—the unchangeable—justice, mercy, truth—that they could not feel. They had got their two schools of orthodoxy — the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel; and, under the orthodoxy of these popular idols of the day, they were content to lose their own power of independent thought: souls that had shrunk away from all goodness and nobleness, and withered into the mummy of a soul. They could jangle about the breadth of a phylactery; they could discuss, as if it were a matter of life and death, ecclesiastical questions about tithe; they could decide to a furlong the length of journey allowable on the sabbath-day; but they could not look with mercy upon a broken heart pouring itself out to God in His temple, nor suffer a hungry man to rub an ear of corn on the Sabbath, nor cover the shame of a tempted sister or an erring brother. Men without souls, from whose narrow hearts the grandeur of everlasting truth was shut out.

There was another class in Israel as different from the Pharisees as man can be from man. The Sadducees could not be satisfied with the creed of Pharisaism, and had begun to cross-examine its pretensions. They felt that the thing which stood before them there, challenging the exclusive name of religion, with its washing of cups, its fastings, its parchment texts, this had nothing in it of the Eternal and the Infinite. This comes not from the Almighty God, and so from doubt they passed on to denial. The usual order had taken place. The reaction from superstition is infidelity. The reaction from ultra-strictness is laxity. The reaction from Pharisaism was the Sadducee. And the Sadducee, with a dreadful daring, had had the firmness to say: "Well then, there is no life to come. That is settled. I have looked into the abyss without trembling. There is no phantom there. There is neither angel, spirit, nor life to come. And this glorious thing, man, with his deep thoughts, and his great, unsatisfied heart, his sorrows and his loves, godlike and immortal as he seems, is but dust animated for a time, passing into the nothingness out of which he came." That cold and hopeless creed was the creed of Sadduceeism. Human souls were trying to live on that, and find it enough.

And the strange thing was that these men, so positive in their creed, so distinct in their denial, so intolerant of the very name of future existence, crowded to John to make those confessions, and promise that new life, which were meet for men who desired to flee from the wrath to come. Wrath to come! What had the infidel to do with that? Repentance unto life! Why should the denier of life listen to that? Fruits meet for repentance! What had the formalist to do with that rebuke, whose life was already all that could be needed? "O generation of vipers," said the prophet, in astonishment, "who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?"

I deduce, from those facts which astonished John, two truths. Formalism, even morality, will not satisfy the conscience of man. Infidelity will not give rest to his troubled spirit. It is a pregnant lesson, if we will only read it thoughtfully, to consider those two classes going up for baptism. That heart of man which the moralist tells us is so pure and excellent, the light of day has shone into it, and behold, in the moralist's self, it is not pure, but polluted and miserable: else, what has that Pharisee to do with the symbol of new life which he has gone to John to use? That clear, unbiased intellect with which the skeptic reached his conclusions, behold it is not clear nor unbiased! It has been warped by an evil life. His heart is restless, and dark, and desolate; else, why is that Sadducee trembling on Jordan's brink? There is a something which they want, both Pharisee and Sadducee, and they come to see if baptism will give it them. Strangely moved indeed must those men have been—ay, shaken to the inmost soul—before they could so contradict their own profession as to acknowledge that there was a hollowness in their hearts. We almost fancy we can stand at the water's edge and hear the confession which was wrung from their lips, hot-burning and choked with sobs, during the single hour in which reality had forced itself upon their souls:—"It is a lie!—we are *not* happy—we are miserable—Prophet of the Invisible! what hast thou got to tell us of that awful other world?"

For when man comes to front the everlasting God, and look the splendor of His judgments in the face, personal integrity, the dream of spotlessness and innocence, vanish into thin air: your decencies, and your church-goings, and your regularities, and your attachment to a correct school and party, your gospel formulas of sound doctrine—what is all that, in front of the blaze of the wrath to come?

And skepticism too, how philosophical and manly soever it may appear, will it rock the conscience with an everlasting lullaby? Will it make, with all its reasonings, the tooth of the worm less sharp, and the fire less fierce that smoulders inwardly? Let but the plain, true man speak. We ask from him no rhetoric. We require no eloquence. Let him but say, in his earnestness, Repent—or—Wrath to come, and then what has infidelity to fall back upon?

There is rest in this world nowhere except in Christ the manifested love of God. Trust in excellence, and the better you become, the keener is the feeling of deficiency. Wrap up all in doubt, and there is a stern voice that will thunder at last out of the wilderness upon your dream.

A heart renewed—a loving heart—a penitent and humble heart—a heart broken and contrite, purified by love—that and only that is the rest of man. Spotlessness may do for angels, repentance unto life is the highest that belongs to man.

IX.

CAIAPHAS'S VIEW OF VICARIOUS SACRIFICE.

"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high-priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death."—John xi. 49–53.

On this occasion, the first resolution passed the Jewish Sanhedrim to compass the death of Jesus. The immediate occasion of their meeting was the fame of the resurrection of Lazarus. There were many causes which made the Saviour obnoxious to the priests and Pharisees. If that teaching were once received, their reign was over: a teaching which abolished the pretensions of a priesthood, by making every man his own priest, to offer spiritual sacrifices to God—which identified religion with Goodness—making spiritual excellence, not ritual regularity, the righteousness which God accepts—which brought God within the reach of the sinner and the fallen—which simplified the whole matter by making religion a thing of the heart, and not of rabbinical learning or theology:—such teaching swept away all the exclusive pretensions of Pharisaism, made the life which they had been building up with so much toil for years time wasted, and reduced their whole existence to a lie.

This was the ground of their hatred to the Son of Man. But this was not the ground which they put forward. He was tried chiefly on the charge of treason against the Emperor; and the argument by which the mind of the judge was principally swayed was, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." The present passage contains the first trace of the adoption of that ground. "If we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

Be it observed, then, the real ground of opposition was hatred of the light. The ostensible ground was patriotism, public zeal, loyalty, far-sighted policy; and such is life. The motive on which a deed of sin is done is not the motive which a man allows to others, or whispers to himself. Listen to the criminal receiving sentence, and the cause of condemnation is not the enormity of the crime, but the injustice of the country's law. Hear the man of disorderly life, whom society has expelled from her bosom, and the cause of the expulsion is not his profligacy, but the false slander which has misrepresented him. Take his own account of the matter, and he is innocent—injured—pure. For there are names so tender, and so full of fond endearment, with which this world sugars over its dark guilt towards God, with a crust of superficial whiteness, that the sin on which eighteen centuries have looked back appalled was, to the doers of that sin, nothing atrocious, but respectable, defensible, nay even, under the circumstances, necessary.

The judgment of one of these righteous murderers was given in remarkable terms. Apparently there were some in the council, such men as Nicodemus, who could not acquiesce in the view given of the matter. Doubtless they alleged the unfairness of the proceeding, and the innocence of the accused; upon which Caiaphas replied, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The remarkable point in this judgment is, that it contained the very central doctrine of Christianity: unconsciously, Caiaphas had uttered the profoundest of all truths, the necessity of the innocent suffering for the guilty. He had stated it in the very words which St. John could have himself adopted. But they meant one thing in the lips of holy Love, and quite another thing in the lips of tyrannical Policy. Yet St. John, contemplating that sentence years after, could not but feel that there was something in the words deeper than met the ear—a truth almost inspired, which he did not hesitate to call prophetic. "Being high-priest that year, he *prophesied.*"

We must not, therefore, call this merely a singular coincidence. It was the same truth viewed from different sides: the side of Caiaphas, and the side of John; the side of the world, and the side of God. That truth was the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

And there are two ways in which you may contemplate that sacrifice. Seen from the world's point of view, it is unjust, gross, cruel. Seen as John saw it, and as God looks at it, it was the sublimest of all truths; one which so entwines itself with our religious consciousness, that you might as soon tear from us our very being, as our convictions of the reality of Christ's atonement. Our subject, then, is the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. The words of Caiaphas contain a formal falsehood and a material truth: the outward statement, and an inspired or prophetic inward verity—so that the subject branches into two topics:

I. The human form, in which the words are false.
II. The divine principle or spirit, in which they are true.

I. The human form, in which the words are false.

Vicarious means in the stead of. When the Pope calls himself the vicar of Christ, he means that he is empowered in the stead of Christ to absolve, decree, etc. When we speak of vicarious suffering, we mean that suffering which is endured in another's stead, and not as the sufferer's own desert.

1. The first falsity in the human statement of that truth of vicarious sacrifice is its injustice. Some one said the accused is innocent. The reply was, Better that one should die than many. "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." It was simply with Caiaphas a question of numbers: the unjust expediency of wresting the law a little to do much apparent good. The reply to that was plain. Expediency can not obliterate right and wrong. Expediency may choose the best possible when the conceivable best is not attainable; but in right and wrong there is no better and best. Thou *shalt* not do wrong. Thou *must* not: you may not tell a lie to save life. Better that the whole Jewish nation should perish, than that a Jewish legislature should steep its hand in the blood of one innocent. It is *not* expedient to do injustice.

There are cases in which it is expedient to choose the sacrifice of one instead of that of many. When a whole army or regiment has mutinied, the commander, instead of general butchery, may select a few to perish as examples to the rest. There is nothing here unjust. The many escape, but the few who die deserve to die. But no principle could justify a commander in selecting an innocent man, condemning him by unjust sentence, and affecting to believe that he was guilty, while the transgressors escaped, and learned the enormity of their transgressions by seeing execution done upon the guiltless. No principle can justify—nothing can do more than palliate the conduct of the ship's crew upon the raft who slay one of their number to support their existence on his flesh. No man would justify the parent, pursued in his chariot by wolves over Siberian snows, who throws out one of his children to the pack, that the rest may escape while their fangs are buried in their victim. You feel at once expediency has no place here. Life is a trifle compared with law. Better that all should perish by a visitation of God, than that they should be saved by one murder.

I do not deny that this aspect has been given to the sacrifice of Christ. It has been represented as if the majesty of law demanded a victim: and, so as it glutted its insatiate thirst, one victim would do as well as another—the purer and the more innocent the better. It has been exhibited as if Eternal Love resolved in fury to strike, and so as He had His blow, it mattered not whether it fell on the whole world, or on the precious head of His own chosen Son.

Unitarianism has represented the Scriptural view in this way, or, rather perhaps, we should say, it has been so represented to Unitarians—and, from a view so horrible, no wonder if Unitarianism has recoiled. But it is not our fault if some blind defenders of the truth have converted the self-devotion of love into a Brahminical sacrifice. If the work of redemption be defended by parallels drawn from the most atrocious records and principles of heathenism, let not the fault be laid upon the Bible. We disclaim that as well as they. It makes God a Caiaphas. It makes Him adopt the words of Caiaphas in the sense of Caiaphas. It represents Him in terms which better describe the ungoverned rage of Saul, missing his stroke at David, who has offended, and in disappointed fury dashing his javelin at his own son Jonathan.

You must not represent the Atonement as dependent on the justice of unrighteous expediency.

2. This side of viewing the truth was the side of selfishness. It was not even the calm resolve of men balancing whether it be better for one to die or many, but whether it is better that He or *we* should perish. It is conceivable in the case supposed above, that a parent in the horrible dilemma should be enough bewildered to resolve to sacrifice one rather than lose all; but it is not conceivable that the doubt in his mind should be this—Shall *I* and the rest perish or this one?—yet this was the spirit in which the party of Caiaphas spoke. "The Romans will come and take away *our* place and *our* nation."

And this spirit, too, is in human nature. The records of antiquity are full of it. If a fleet could not sail, it was assumed that the deities were offended. The purest and tenderest maiden of the royal household was selected to bleed upon the altar: and when the sharp knife passed to her innocent heart, this was the feeling in the bosoms of those stern and unrelenting warriors—of the blood and of the stock of Caiaphas—Better she should suffer than we.

This *may* be the way in which the sacrifice of Christ is regarded by us. There is a kind of acquiescence in the Atonement which is purely selfish. The more bloody the representation of the character of God, the greater, of course, the satisfaction in feeling sheltered from it. The more wrath instead of love is believed to be the Divine name, the more may a man find joy in believing that he is safe. It is the feeling of the Siberian story: the innocent has glutted the wolves, and we may pursue our journey in safety. Christ has suffered, and I am safe. He bore the agony—I take the reward: I may now live with impunity: and, of course, it is very easy to call acquiescence in that arrangement humility, and to take credit for the abnegation of self-righteousness: but whoever can acquiesce in that thought chiefly in reference to *personal safety*, and, without desiring to share the Redeemer's cross, aspire to enjoy the comforts and the benefits of the Redeemer's sacrifice, has but something of the spirit of Caiaphas after all, the spirit which contentedly sacrifices another for self—selfishness assuming the form of wisdom.

II. We pass to the prophetic or hidden spirit in which these words are true.

I observe, first, that vicarious sacrifice is the Law of Being. It is a mysterious and fearful thing to observe how all God's universe is built upon this law, how it penetrates and pervades all Nature, so that if it were to cease, Nature would cease to exist. Hearken to the Saviour himself expounding this principle: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We are justified, therefore, in assuming the Law of Nature to be the Law of His own Sacrifice, for He himself represents it as the parallel.

Now observe this world of God's. The mountain-rock must have its surface rusted into putrescence and become dead soil before the herb can grow. The destruction of the mineral is the life of the vegetable. Again the same process begins. The "corn of wheat dies," and out of death more abundant life is born. Out of the soil in which deciduous leaves are buried, the young tree shoots vigorously, and strikes its roots deep down into the realm of decay and death. Upon the life of the vegetable world, the myriad forms of higher life sustain themselves—still the same law: the sacrifice of life to give life. Farther still; have we never pondered over that mystery of nature—the dove struck down by the hawk—the deer trembling beneath the stroke of the lion—the winged fish falling into the jaws of the dolphin? It is the solemn law of vicarious sacrifice again. And as often as man sees his table covered with the flesh of animals slain, does he behold, whether he think of it or not, the deep mystery and law of being. They have surrendered their innocent lives that he may live.

Nay, farther still: it is as impossible for man to live as it is for man to be redeemed, except through vicarious suffering. The anguish of the mother is the condition of the child's life. His very being has its roots in the law of sacrifice; and from his birth onward, instinctively this becomes the law which rules his existence. There is no blessing which was ever enjoyed by man which did not come through this. There was never a country cleared for civilization, and purified of its swamps and forests, but the first settlers paid the penalty of that which their successors enjoy. There never was a victory won, but the conquerors who took possession of the conquest passed over the bodies of the noblest slain, who died that they might win.

Now observe, all this is the law obeyed, either unconsciously or else instinctively. But in the redemption of our humanity, a moment comes when that law is recognized as the will of God adopted *consciously*, and voluntarily obeyed as the law of man's existence. Then it is that man's true nobleness, his only possible blessedness, and his redemption from blind instincts and mere selfishness, begin. You may evade that law—you may succeed in living as Caiaphas did, sacrificing others instead of yourself—and men will call you wise, and prudent, and respectable. But you are only a Caiaphas: redeemed you are not. Your proper humanity has not begun.

The highest Man recognized that law, and joyfully embraced it as the law of His existence. It was the consciousness of His surrender to that as God's will, and the voluntariness of the act, which made it sacrifice. Hear Him: "No man taketh my life from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." "This commandment have I received from my Father." Had he been by the wiles of Caiaphas simply surprised and dragged struggling and reluctant to doom, He would have been a victim, but not a sacrifice; He would have been an object of our compassion, but by no means of our admiring wonder. It was the foresight of all the result of His opposition to the world's sin, and His steady uncompromising battle against it notwithstanding, in every one of its forms, knowing that He must be its victim at the last, which prevented His death from being merely the death of a lamb slain unconsciously on Jewish altars, and elevated it to the dignity of a true and proper sacrifice.

We go beyond this, however. It was not merely a sacrifice, it was a sacrifice for sin. "His soul was made an offering for sin." Neither was it only a sacrifice for sin—it was a sacrifice for the *world's* sin. In the text, "that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Two ideas are necessary to be distinctly apprehended by us in order to understand that: the first is the notion of punishment, the second is the idea of the world's sin.

By punishment is simply meant the penalty annexed to transgression of a law. Punishment is of two kinds: the penalty which follows ignorant transgression, and the chastisement which ensues upon willful disobedience. The first of these is called imputed guilt, the second is actual guilt. By imputed guilt is meant, in theological language, that a person is treated as if he were guilty: if, for example, you approach too near the whirling wheel of steam machinery, the mutilation which follows is the punishment of temerity. If the traveller ignorantly lays his hand on the cockatrice's den, the throb of the envenomed fang is the punishment of his ignorance. He has broken a law of nature, and the guilt of the infection is imputed to him; there is penalty, but there is none of the chastisement which follows sin. His conscience is not made miserable. He only suffers.

Farther, according to the constitution of this world, it is not only our own transgressions of ignorance, but besides, the faults of others, which bring pain and sorrow on us. The man of irritable and miserably nervous temperament owes that often to a father's intemperance. Many a man has to struggle all his life with the penury which he reaps as the harvest of a distant ancestor's extravagance. In the strictest sense of the word, these are punishments—the consequences annexed to transgression: and, in the language of theology, they are called imputed guilt. But there is an all-important distinction between them and the chastisements of personal iniquity. If a man suffer ill health or poverty as the results of his own misconduct, his conscience forces him to refer this to the wrath of God. He is reaping as he had sown, and the miseries of conscious fault are added to his penalty. But if such things come as the penalty of the wrong of others, then, philosophically though you may call them punishment, in the popular sense of the word they are no punishments at all, but rather corrective discipline, nay, even richest blessings, if they are received from a Father's hand, and transmuted by humbleness into the means of spiritual growth.

Apply all this to the sacrifice of Christ. Let no man say that Christ bore the wrath of God. Let no man say that God was angry with His Son. We are sometimes told of a mysterious anguish which Christ endured, the consequence of Divine wrath, the sufferings of a heart laden with the conscience of the world's transgressions which He was bearing as if they were His own sins. Do not add to the Bible what is not in the Bible. The Redeemer's conscience was not bewildered to feel *that* as His own which was *not* His own. He suffered no wrath of God. Twice came the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am *well pleased*." There was seen an angel strengthening Him. Nay, even to the last, never did the consciousness of purity and the Father's love forsake Him. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Christ came into collision with the world's evil, and He bore the penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces. He laid His hand upon the cockatrice's den, and its fangs pierced Him. It is the law which governs the conflict with evil. It can be only crushed by suffering from it. . . . . The Son of man who puts His naked foot on the serpent's head, crushes it: but the fang goes into His heel.

The Redeemer bore imputed sin. He bore the penalty of others' sin. He was punished. Did He bear the anger of the Most High? Was His the hell of an accusing conscience?—In the name of Him who is God, not Caiaphas, *never*. Something more, however, is necessary to complete our notion of punishment. It is a right estimate of law. We are apt to think of punishment as something quite arbitrary, which can be remitted or changed at will. Hence we almost always connect it with the idea of wrath; hence, the heathen tried to bribe and coax their deities to spare; and hence the sacrifice of Christ comes to be looked upon in the light of a sagacious or ingenious contrivance, a mere "scheme" of redemption.

Now remember what law is. The moral laws of this universe are as immutable as God Himself. Law is the Being of God. God can not alter those laws: He can not make wrong right. He can not make truth falsehood, nor false hood truth. He can not make sin blessed, nor annex hell to innocence. Law moves on its majestic course irresistible. If His chosen Son violates law, and throws Himself from the pinnacle, He dies. If you resist a law of the universe in its eternal march, the universe crushes you, that is all. Consider what law is, and then the idea of bloody vengeance passes away altogether from the sacrifice. It is not "an eye for an eye," and "a tooth for a tooth," in the sanguinary spirit of the old retaliatory legislation. It is the eternal impossibility of violating that law of the universe whereby penalty is annexed to transgression, and must fall, either laden with curse or rich in blessing.

The second idea which it behooves us to master is that of the world's sin. The Apostle John always viewed sin as a great connected principle—*One;* a single world-spirit—exactly as the electricity with which the universe is charged is indivisible, imponderable, one, so that you can not separate it from the great ocean of fluid. The electric spark that slumbers in the dew-drop is part of the flood which struck the oak. Had that spark not been there, it could be demonstrated that the whole previous constitution of the universe might have been different, and the oak not have been struck.

Let us possess ourselves of this view of sin, for it is the true one. Separate acts of sin are but manifestations of one great principle. It was thus that the Saviour looked on the sins of His day. The Jews of that age had had no hand in the murder of Abel or Zacharias, but they were of kindred spirit with the men who slew them. Condemning their murderers, they imitated their act. In that imitation they "allowed the deeds of their fathers;" they shared in the guilt of the act which had been consummated, because they had the spirit which led to it. "The blood of them all shall come on this generation." It was so, too, that Stephen looked on the act of his assassins. When God's glory streamed upon his face, he felt that the transaction going on then was not simply the violence of a mob in an obscure corner of the world, it was an outbreak of the great principle of evil. He saw in their act the resurrection of the spirit of those who had "resisted the Holy Ghost" in their day, slain the prophets, opposed Moses, crucified "the just one," and felt that their genuine descendants were now opposing themselves to the form in which Truth and Goodness were appearing in his day.

It is in this way only that you will be able, with any reality of feeling, to enter into the truth that "your sins nailed

Him to the cross;" that "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" that He died "not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." If, for instance, indisputable evidence be given of the saintliness of a man whose creed and views are not yours, and rather than admit that good in him *is* good, you invent all manner of possible motives to discredit his excellence, then let the thought arise, This is the resurrection of the spirit which was rampant in the days of Jesus; the spirit of those who saw the purest goodness, and rather than acknowledge it to be good, preferred to account for it as a diabolical power. Say to yourself, I am verging on the spirit of the sin that was unpardonable, I am crucifying the Son of God afresh.

If in society you hear the homage unrebuked—Honor to the rich man's splendid offering, instead of glory to the widow's humble mite—if you see the weak and defenseless punished severely for the sins which the great and strong do unblushingly, and even with the connivance and admiration of society—if you find sins of frailty placed on the same level with sins of pride and presumption—or if you find guilt of any kind palliated instead of mourned, then let the dreadful thought arise in the fullness of its meaning—I allow the deeds of those days—His blood shall come upon this generation. My sin and your sin, the sin of all, bears the guilt of the Redeemer's sacrifice. It *was* vicarious—He suffered for what He never did. "Not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

To conclude: estimate rightly the death of Christ. It was not simply the world's example—it was the world's Sacrifice. He died not merely as a martyr to the truth. His death is the world's life. Ask ye what life is? Life is not exemption from penalty. Salvation is not escape from suffering and punishment. The Redeemer suffered punishment, but the Redeemer's soul had blessedness in the very midst of punishment. Life is elevation of soul—nobleness—Divine character. The spirit of Caiaphas was death: to receive all, and give nothing—to sacrifice others to himself. The spirit of Christ was life: to give and not receive—to be sacrificed, and not to sacrifice. Hear Him again: "He that loseth his life, the same shall find it." That is life: the spirit of losing all for love's sake. That is the soul's life which alone is blessedness and heaven. By realizing that ideal of humanity, Christ furnished the life which we appropriate to ourselves only when we enter into His spirit.

Listen: Only by renouncing sin is His death to sin yours—only by quitting it are you free from the guilt of His blood—only by voluntary acceptance of the law of the Cross, self-surrender to the will of God, and self-devotion to the good of others as the law of your being, do you enter into that present and future heaven which is the purchase of His vicarious sacrifice.

X.

REALIZING THE SECOND ADVENT.

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."—Job xix. 25–27.

The hardest, the severest, the last lesson which man has to learn upon this earth, is submission to the will of God. It is the hardest lesson, because to our blinded eye-sight it often seems a cruel will. It is a severe lesson, because it can be only taught by the blighting of much that had been most dear. It is the last lesson, because when a man has learned that, he is fit to be transplanted from a world of willfulness to a world in which one will alone is loved, and only one is done. All that saintly experience ever had to teach resolves itself into this, the lesson how to say affectionately, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Slowly and stubbornly our hearts acquiesce in that. The holiest in this congregation, so far as he has mastered the lesson, will acknowledge that many a sore and angry feeling against his God had to be subdued, many a dream of earthly brightness broken, and many a burning throb stilled in a proud, resentful heart, before he was willing to suffer God to be sovereign in His own world, and do with him and his as seemed to Him best.

The earliest record that we have of this struggle in the human bosom is found in the Book of Job. It is the most ancient statement we have of the perplexities and miseries of life, so graphic, so true to nature, that it proclaims at once that what we are reading is drawn not from romance but life. It has been said that religious experience is but the fictitious creation of a polished age, when fanciful feelings are called into existence by hearts bent back in reflex and morbid action on themselves. We have an answer to that in this book. Religion is no morbid fancy. In the rough, rude ages when Job lived, when men did not dwell on their feelings as in later centuries, the heart-work of religion was manifestly the same earnest, passionate thing that it is now. The heart's misgivings were the same beneath the tent of an Arabian Emir which they are beneath the roof of a modern Christian. Blow after blow fell on the Oriental chieftain. One day he was a father—a prince—the lord of many vassals and many flocks, and buoyant in one of the best of blessings, health; the next, he was a childless, blighted, ruined man. And then it was that there came from Job's lips those yearnings for the quiet of the grave which are so touching, so real; and, considering that some of the strongest of the elect of God have yielded to them for a moment, we might almost say, so pardonable: "I should have been at rest—where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together: they hear not the voice of the oppressor. Wherefore is light given unto him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter of soul—which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures—which rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave?"

What is the Book of Job but the record of an earnest soul's perplexities? The double difficulty of life solved there, the existence of moral evil—the question whether suffering is a mark of wrath or not. What falls from Job's lips is the musing of a man half-stunned, half-surprised, looking out upon the darkness of life, and asking sorrowfully why are these things so? And all that falls from his friends' lips is the common-place remarks of men upon what is inscrutable—maxims learned second-hand by rote and not by heart, fragments of deep truths, but truths misapplied, distorted, torn out of all connection of time and place, so as to become actual falsehoods: only blistering a raw wound.

It was from these awkward admonitions that Job appealed in the text. He appealed from the tribunal of man's opinion to a tribunal where sincerity shall be cleared and vindicated. He appealed from a world of confusion, where all the foundations of the earth are out of course, to a world where all shall be set right. He appealed from the dark dealings of a God whose way it is to hide Himself, to a God who shall stand upon this earth in the clear radiance of a love on which suspicion's self can not rest a doubt. It was faith straining through the mist, and discerning the firm land that is beyond. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." We take two points:

I. The certainty of God's interference in the affairs of this world.

II. The means of realizing that interference.

God's interference, again, is contemplated in this passage in a twofold aspect: A present superintendence—"I know that my Redeemer liveth." A future, personal, visible interference—"He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

I. His present superintendence.

1. The first truth contained in that is God's personal existence. It is not chance, nor fate, which sits at the wheel of this world's revolutions. It was no fortuitous concourse of atoms which massed themselves into a world of beauty. It was no accidental train of circumstances which has brought the human race to their present state. It was a living God. And it is just so far as *this* is the conviction of every day, and every hour, and every minute—"My Redeemer *liveth*"—that one man deserves to be called more religious than another. To be religious is to feel that God is the Ever Near. It is to go through life with this thought coming instinctively and unbidden, "Thou, God, seest me." A life of religion is a life of faith: and faith is that strange faculty by which man feels the presence of the invisible; exactly as some animals have the power of seeing in the dark. That is the difference between the Christian and the world.

Most men know nothing beyond what they see. This lovely world is all in all to them: its outer beauty, not its hidden loveliness. Prosperity—struggle—sadness—it is all the same. They struggle through it all alone, and when old age comes, and the companions of early days are gone, they feel that they are solitary. In all this strange, deep world they never meet, or but for a moment, the Spirit of it all, who stands at their very side. And it is exactly the opposite of this that makes a Christian. Move where he will, there is a Thought and a Presence which he can not put aside. He is haunted forever by the Eternal Mind. God looks out upon him from the clear sky, and through the thick darkness—is present in the raindrop that trickles down the branches, and in the tempest that crashes down the forest. A living Redeemer stands beside him—goes with him—talks with him, as a man with his friend. The emphatic description of a life of spirituality is: "Enoch walked with God:" and it seems to be one reason why a manifestation of God was given us in the flesh, that this livingness of God might be more distinctly felt by us.

We must not throw into these words of Job a meaning which Job had not. Reading these verses, some have discovered in them all the Christian doctrine of the Second Advent—of a Resurrection—of the Humanity of Christ. This is simply an anachronism. Job was an Arabian Emir, not a Christian. All that Job meant by these words was, that he knew he had a vindicator in God above: that though his friends had the best of it then, and though worms were preying on his flesh, yet at last God Himself would interfere to prove his innocence. But God has given to us, for our faith to rest on, something more distinct and tangible than He gave to Job. There has been One on earth through whose lips God's voice spoke, and from whose character was reflected the character of God. A living Person manifesting Deity. It is all this added meaning gained from Christ with which we use these words: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But we must remember that all that was not revealed to Job.

2. The second truth implied in the personal existence of a Redeemer is sympathy. It was the keenest part of Job's trial that no heart beat pulse to pulse with his. His friends misunderstood him; and his wife, in a moment of atheistic bitterness, in the spirit of our own infidel poet, "Let no man say that God in mercy gave that stroke," addressed him thus: "Curse God and die." In the midst of this, it seems to have risen upon his heart with a strange power to soothe, that he was not alone: gall and bitterness were distilling from the lips of man, and molten lead was dropping from the hand of God. But there was a great difference between the two inflictions. Men were doing their work, unknowing of the pain they gave: God was meting out His in the scales of a most exquisite compassion, not one drop too much, and every drop that fell had a meaning of love in it. "Affliction," said the tried man, "cometh not out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground"—superintending all this, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

And here there is one word full of meaning, from which we collect the truth of sympathy. It is that little word of appropriation, "my" Redeemer. Power is shown by God's attention to the vast; sympathy by His condescension to the small. It is not the thought of heaven's sympathy by which we are impressed, when we gaze through the telescope on the mighty world of space, and gain an idea of what is meant by infinite. Majesty and power are there, but the very vastness excludes the thought of sympathy. It is when we look into the world of insignificance which the microscope reveals, and find that God has gorgeously painted the atoms of creation, and exquisitely furnished forth all that belongs to minutest life, that we feel that God sympathizes and individualizes.

When we are told that God is the Redeemer of the *world*, we know that love dwells in the bosom of the Most High; but if we want to know that God feels for us individually and separately, we must learn by heart this syllable of endearment, "*My* Redeemer." Child of God, if you would have your thought of God something beyond a cold feeling of His presence, let faith *appropriate* Christ. You are as much the object of God's solicitude as if none lived but yourself. He has counted the hairs of your head. In Old Testament language, "He has put your tears into His bottle." He has numbered your sighs and your smiles. He has interpreted the desires for which you have not found a name nor an utterance yourself. If you have not learned to say, "*My* Redeemer," then just so far as there is any thing tender or affectionate in your disposition, you will tread the path of your pilgrimage with a darkened and a lonely heart; and when the day of trouble comes, there will be none of that triumphant elasticity which enabled Job to look down, as from a rock, upon the surges which were curling their crests of fury at his feet, but could only reach his bosom with their spent spray.

3. The third thing implied in the present superintendence is God's vindication of wrongs. The word translated here Redeemer is one of quite peculiar signification. In all the early stages of society the redress of wrongs is not a public, but a private act. It was then as now—blood for blood. But the executioner of the law was invested with something of a sacred character. Now he is the mere creature of a country's law, then he was the delegated hand of God; for the next of kin to the murdered man stood forward solemnly in God's name as the champion of the defenseless, the *goel*, or Avenger of Blood. Goel is the word here: so that, translated into the language of those far-back days, Job was professing his conviction that there was a champion or an Avenger, who would one day do battle for his wrongs.

It is a fearful amount of this kind of work which is in arrear for the Avenger to execute, accumulating century by century, and year by year. From the days of Cain and Abel there have been ever two classes: the oppressor and the oppressed; the gentle humble ones who refuse to right themselves, and the unscrupulous who force them aside. The Church has ever had the world against it. The world struck its first deadly blow by the hand of Cain, and it has been striking ever since: from the battle-field, and the martyr's stake, and the dungeons of the Inquisition, and the prisons of the lordly tyrant, the blood of the innocent has cried for vengeance. By taunt and sneer, the world has had her triumph. And the servants of the Meekest have only had *this* to cheer them, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

There is a persecution sharper than that of the axe. There is an iron that goes into the heart deeper than the knife. Cruel sneers, and sarcasms, and pitiless judgments, and cold-hearted calumnies—these are persecution. There is the tyrant of the nursery, and the play-ground, and the domestic circle, as well as of the judgment-hall. "Better were it," said the Redeemer, "for that man if a millstone had been hanged about his neck." Did you ever do that? Did you ever pour bitterness into a heart that God was bruising, by a cold laugh, or a sneer, or a galling suspicion—into a sister's heart, or a friend's, or even a stranger's?—Remember—when you sent them, as Job's friends sent him, to pour out their griefs alone before their Father, your name went up to the Avenger's ears, mingled with the cries of His own elect.

There is a second mode in which God interferes in this world's affairs. There is a present superintendence perceived by faith? but there is a future redress which will be made manifest to sight. "He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." I shall see Him.

First of all, there will be a visible, personal interference. All that Job meant was in the case of his own wrongs. But if *we* use those words, we must apply them in a higher sense. The Second Advent of Christ is supposed by some to mean an appearance of Jesus in the flesh to reign and triumph visibly. Others who feel that the visual perception of His form would be a small blessing, and that the highest and truest presence is always spiritual and realized by the Spirit, believe that His advent will be a coming in power. We will not dispute: controversy whets the intellect, and only starves, or worse, poisons the heart. We will take what is certain. Every signal manifestation of the right, and vindication of the truth in judgment, is called in Scripture a coming of the Son of Man. A personal advent of the Redeemer is one which can be perceived by foes as well as recognized by friends. The destruction of Jerusalem, recognized by the heathen themselves as judgment, is called in the Bible a coming of Christ. In the Deluge, in the destruction of the cities of the plain, in the confusion of tongues, God is said to have come down to visit the earth. There are two classes, then, who shall see that sight. Men like Job, who feel that their Redeemer liveth; and men like Balaam, from whose lips words of truth, terrible to him, came: "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh." "Every eye shall see Him." *You* will see the triumph of the right—the destruction of the wrong. The awful question is, As Balaam —or as Job?

Besides this, it will be unexpected: every judgment coming of Christ is as the springing of a mine. There is a moment of deep suspense after the match has been applied to the fuse which is to fire the train. Men stand at a distance, and hold their breath. There is nothing seen but a thin, small column of white smoke, rising fainter and fainter, till it seems to die away. Then men breathe again; and the inexperienced soldier would approach the place thinking that the thing has been a failure. It is only faith in the experience of the commander, or the veterans, which keeps men from hurrying to the spot again—till just when expectation has begun to die away, the low, deep thunder sends up the column of earth majestically to heaven, and all that was on it comes crushing down again in its far circle, shattered and blackened with the blast.

It is so with the world. By God's word the world is doomed. The moment of suspense is past: the first centuries, in which men expected the convulsion to take place at once; for even apostles were looking for it in their lifetime. We have fallen upon days of skepticism. There are no signs of ruin yet. We tread upon it like a solid thing fortified by its adamantine hills forever. There is nothing against that but a few words in a printed book. But the world is mined: and the spark has fallen; and just at the moment when serenity is at its height, "the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and the feet of the Avenger shall stand on the earth.

II. The means of realizing this interference.

There is a difference between knowing a thing and realizing it. When a poor man becomes suddenly the possessor of a fortune or of dignity, it is some time before the thing becomes so natural to him that he can act in his new sphere like his proper self: it is all strangeness at first. When the criminal hears the death-sentence in the dock, his cheeks are tearless. He hears the words, but scarcely understands that they have any thing to do with him. He has not realized that it is he himself that has to die. When bereavement comes, it is not at the moment when the breath leaves the body that we feel what has been lost: we know, but yet we must have it in detail: see the empty chair, and the clothes that will never be worn again, and perceive day after day pass, and he comes not: then we realize.

Job *knew* that God was the vindicator of wrongs—that he said. But why did he go on repeating in every possible form the same thing: "I shall see God—see him for myself—mine eyes shall behold Him—yes, mine and not another's?" It would seem as if he were doing what a man does when he repeats over and over to himself a thing which he can not picture out in its reality. It was true: but it was strange, and shadowy, and unfamiliar.

It is no matter of uncertainty to any one of us whether he himself shall die. He knows it. Every time the funeral bell tolls, the thought in some shape suggests itself, I am a mortal, dying man. That is knowing it. Which of us has realized it? Who can shut his eyes, and bring it before him as a reality, that the day will come when the hearse will stand at the door for him, and that all this bright world will be going on without him; and that the very flesh which now walks about so complacently, will have the coffin-lid shut down upon it, and be left to darkness, and loneliness, and silence, and the worm? Or take a case still more closely suggested by the text—out of the grave we must arise again—long after all that is young, and strong, and beautiful before me shall have mouldered into forgetfulness. Earth shall hear her Master's voice breaking the long silence of the centuries, and our dust shall hear it, and stand up among the myriads that are moving on to judgment. Each man in his own proper identity, his very self, must see God, and be seen by Him—looking out on the strange new scene, and doomed to be an actor in it for all eternity. We all *know* that—on which of our hearts is it stamped, not as a doctrine to be proved by texts, but as one of those things which must be hereafter, and in sight of which we are to live now?

There are two ways suggested to us by this passage for realizing these things. The first of these is meditation. No man forgets what the mind has dwelt long on. It is not by a passing glance that things become riveted in the memory. It is by forcing the memory to call them up again and again in leisure hours. It is in the power of meditation to bring danger in its reality so vividly before the imagination that the whole frame can start instinctively as if the blow were falling, or as if the precipice were near. It is in the power of meditation so to engrave scenes of loveliness on a painter's eye that he transfers to the canvas a vivid picture that was real to him before it was real to others. It is in the power of meditation so to abstract the soul from all that is passing before the bodily eye, that the tongue shall absently speak out the words with which the heart was full, not knowing that others are standing by. It seems to have been this that Job was doing—he was realizing by meditation. You can scarcely read over these words without fancying them the syllables of a man who was thinking aloud.

It is like a soliloquy rather than a conversation. "I shall see him." Myself. Not another. My own eyes.

This is what we want. It is good for a man to get alone, and then in silence think upon his own death, and feel how time is hurrying him along: that a little while ago, and he was not—a little while still, and he will be no more. It is good to take the Bible in his hands, and read those passages at this season of the year which speak of the Coming and the End of all, till from the printed syllables there seems to come out something that has life, and form, and substance in it, and all things that are passing in the world group themselves in preparation for that, and melt into its outline. Let us try to live with these things in view. God our Friend—Christ our living Redeemer; our sympathizing Brother; our conquering Champion: the triumph of truth, the end of wrong. We shall live upon realities then: and this world will fade away into that which we know it is, but yet can not realize —an appearance, and a shadow.

Lastly, God insures that His children shall realize all this by affliction. Job had admitted these things before, but this time he spoke from the ashes on which he was writhing. And if ever a man is sincere, it is when he is in pain. If ever that superficial covering of conventionalities falls from the soul, which gathers round it as the cuticle does upon the body, and the rust upon the metal, it is when men are suffering. There are many things which nothing but sorrow can teach us. Sorrow is the great teacher. Sorrow is the realizer. It is a strange and touching thing to hear the young speak truths which are not yet within the limits of their experience: to listen while they say that life is sorrowful, that friends are treacherous, that there is quiet in the grave. When we are boys we adopt the phrases that we hear. In a kind of prodigal excess of happiness, we say that the world is a dream, and life a nothing—that eternity lasts forever, and that all here is disappointment. But there comes a day of sharpness, when we find to our surprise that what we said had a meaning in it, and we are startled. That is the sentimentalism of youth passing into reality. In the lips of the young such phrases are only sentimentalities. What we mean by sentimentalism is that state in which a man speaks things deep and true, not because he feels them strongly, but because he perceives that they are beautiful, and that it is touching and fine to say them—things which he fain *would* feel, and fancies that he *does* feel. Therefore, when all is well, when friends abound, and health is strong, and the comforts of life are around us, religion becomes faint and shadowy. Religious phraseology passes into cant—the gay, and light, and trifling use the same words as the holiest; till the earnest man, who *feels* what the world is sentimentalizing about, shuts up his heart, and either coins other phrases or else keeps silence.

And then it is that if God would rescue a man from that unreal world of names and mere knowledge, He does what he did with Job—He strips him of his flocks, and his herds, and his wealth; or else, what is the equivalent, of the power of enjoying them—the desire of his eyes falls from him at a stroke. Things become real then. Trial brings man face to face with God—God and he touch; and the flimsy veil of bright cloud that hung between him and the sky is blown away: he feels that he is standing outside the earth with nothing between him and the Eternal Infinite. Oh, there is something in the sick-bed, and the aching heart, and the restlessness and the languor of shattered health, and the sorrow of affections withered, and the stream of life poisoned at its fountain, and the cold, lonely feeling of utter rawness of heart which is felt when God strikes home in earnest, that forces a man to feel what is real and what is not.

This is the blessing of affliction to those who will lie still and not struggle in a cowardly or a resentful way. It is God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, and saying, In the sunshine and the warmth you can not meet Me: but in the hurricane and the darkness, when wave after wave has swept down and across the soul, you shall see My form, and hear My voice, and know that your Redeemer liveth.

XI.

FIRST ADVENT LECTURE.

THE GRECIAN.

"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."—Rom. i. 14–17.

The season of Advent commemorates three facts. 1. That the Lord has come. 2. That He is perpetually coming. 3. That He will yet come in greater glory than has yet appeared. And these are the three Advents: The first in the flesh, which is past; the second in the spirit; the third, His judgment advent.

The first occupies our attention in these lectures.

We live surrounded by Christian institutions; breathe an atmosphere saturated by Christianity. It is exceedingly difficult even to imagine another state of things. In the enjoyment of domestic purity, it is difficult to conceive the debasing effects of polygamy; in the midst of political liberty, to conceive of the blighting power of slavery; in scientific progress, to imagine mental stagnation; in religious liberty and free goodness, to fancy the reign of superstition.

Yet to realize the blessings of health we must sit by the sick-bed; to feel what light is we must descend into the mine and see the emaciated forms which dwindle away in darkness; to know what the blessing of sunshine is, go down into the valleys where stunted vegetation and dim vapors tell of a scene on which the sun scarcely shines two hours in the day. And to know what we have from Christianity, it is well to cast the eyes sometimes over the darkness from which the Advent of Christ redeemed us.

There are four departments of human nature spoken of in these verses on which the light shined. The apostle felt that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation to the Greeks, the Romans, the Barbarians, and the Jews. In the present lecture we consider Christianity presented to the Grecian character, and superseding the Grecian religion.

Four characteristics marked Grecian life and Grecian religion: Restlessness, worldliness, the worship of the beautiful, the worship of the human.

I. Restlessness. Polytheism divided the contemplation over many objects: and as the outward objects were manifold, so was there a want of unity in the inward life. The Grecian mind was distracted by variety. He was to obtain wisdom from one Deity: eloquence from that Mercurius for whom Paul was taken; purity from Diana for whom Ephesus was zealous; protection for his family or country from the respective tutelary deities; success by a prayer to Fortune.

Hence dissipation of mind—that fickleness for which the Greeks were famous—and the restless love of novelty which made Athens a place of literary and social gossip—"some new thing." All stability of character rests on the contemplation of changeless unity.

So in modern science, which is eminently Christian, having exchanged the bold theorizing of ancient times for the patient humble willingness to be taught by the facts of nature, and performing its wonders by exact imitation of them—on the Christian principle—the Son of man can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do.

And all the results of science have been to simplify and trace back the manifold to unity. Ancient science was only a number of insulated facts and discordant laws; modern science has gradually ranged these under fewer and ever fewer laws. It is ever tending towards unity of law.

For example, gravitation. The planet's motion, and the motion of the atom of water that dashes tumultuously, and as it seems lawlessly, down the foam of the cataract; the floating of the cork, the sinking of the stone, the rise of the balloon, and the curved flight of the arrow, are all brought under one single law, diverse and opposite as they seem.

Hence science is calm and dignified, reposing upon uniform fact. The philosopher's very look tells of repose, resting, as he does, on a few changeless principles.

So also in religion. Christianity proclaimed "One God and one Mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus." Observe the effect in the case of two apostles. St. Paul's view of the Gospel contemplated it as an eternal divine purpose. *His* Gospel, the salvation of the Gentiles, was the eternal purpose which had been hidden from ages and generations. His own personal election was part of an eternal counsel. All the children of God had been predestinated before the creation "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Now see the effect on character. First, on veracity—2 Cor. i. 18, etc. He contemplated the changeless "yea" of God; His own yea became fixed as God's—changeless, and calmly unalterable.

Again in orthodoxy—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." "Be not carried about by divers and strange doctrines." Truth is one, error manifold — many opinions, yet there can be but one faith. See how calm and full of rest all this spirit is.

Now consider St. John. His view of the Gospel recognized it rather as the manifestation of love than the carrying out of the unity of an everlasting purpose. If you view the world as the Greek did, all is so various that you must either refer it to various deities, or to different modes of the same Deity. To-day you are happy—God is pleased: to-morrow miserable—God is angry. But St. John referred these all to unity of character—"God is Love." Pain and pleasure, the sigh and smile, the sunshine and the storm, nay, hell itself, to him were but the results of eternal love.

Hence came deep calm—the repose which we are toiling all our lives to find, and which the Greek never found.

II. Worldliness. There are men and nations to whom this world seems given as their province, as if they had no aspiration above it. If ever there was a nation who understood the science of living, it was the Grecian. They had organized social and domestic life; filled existence with comforts; knew how to extract from every thing its greatest measure of enjoyment. This world was their home; this visible world was the object of their worship. Not like the Orientals, who called all materialism bad, and whose highest object was to escape from it, "to be unclothed, not clothed upon," as St. Paul phrases it. The Greeks looked upon this world in its fallen state, and pronounced it all "very good."

The results were threefold.

1. Disappointment. Lying on the infinite bosom of Nature, the Greek was yet unsatisfied. And there is an insatiable desire above all external forms and objects in man—all men—which they can never satisfy. Hence his craving too, like others, was from time to time, "Who will show us any good?" This dissatisfaction is exhibited in the parable of the prodigal, who is but the symbol of erring humanity. Away from his father's home, the famine came, and he fed on husks. Famine and husks are the world's unsatisfactoriness. A husk is a thing that seems full—is really hollow—

which stays the appetite for a time, but will not support the life. And such is this world—leaving a hollowness at heart, staying our craving but for a time. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." And the worldly man is trying to satiate his immortal hunger upon husks.

3. Degradation. Religion aims at an ideal life above this actual one—to found a divine polity—a kingdom of God—a church of the best. And the life of worldliness pronounces this world to be all. This is to be adorned and beautified. Life as it is. Had you asked the Greek his highest wish, he would have replied, "This world, if it could only last—I ask no more." Immortal youth — and this bright existence. This is to feed on husks, but husks which the swine did eat. No degradation to the swine, for it is their nature; but degradation to man to rest in the outward, visible, and present, for the bosom of God is his home. The Greek, therefore, might be, in his own language, "a reasoning animal," but not one of the children of heaven.

3. Disbelief in immortality. The more the Greek attached himself to this world, the more the world unseen became a dim world of shades. The earlier traditions of the deep-thinking Orientals, which his forefathers brought from Asia, died slowly away, and any one who reminded him of them was received as one would now be who were to speak of purgatory. The cultivated Athenians were for the most part skeptics in the time of Christ. Accordingly, when Paul preached at Athens the resurrection of the dead, they "mocked."

This bright world was all. Its revels, its dances, its theatrical exhibitions, its races, its baths, and academic groves, where literary leisure luxuriated, these were blessedness, and the Greek's hell was death. Their poets speak pathetically of the misery of the wrench from all that is dear and bright. The dreadfulness of death is one of the most remarkable things that meet us in those ancient writings.

And these men were startled by seeing a new sect rise up to whom death was nothing—who almost courted it. They heard an apostle say at Miletus, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." For the cross of Christ had crucified in their hearts the Grecian's world. To them life was honor, integrity, truth; that is the soul: to this all other was to be sacrificed. This was the proper self, which could only die by sin, by denying its own existence. The rise of the higher life had made this life nothing, "and delivered those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

Appeal to the worldly-minded. Melancholy spectacle! Men and women shutting out the idea of death, the courtesies of society concealing from them the mention of their age, by all false appliances of dress, etc., etc., and staying the appearance of the hand of time. You must die. The day will come, and the coffin. Life in God alone robs that thought of dreadfulness: when the resurrection being begun within, you can look upon the decay of the outward man, and feel, I am not dying.

III. The worship of the beautiful. The Greek saw this world almost only on its side of beauty. His name for it was Cosmos, divine order or regularity. He looked at actions in the same way. One and the same adjective expressed the noble and the beautiful. If he wanted to express a perfect man, he called him a musical or harmonious man.

What was the consequence? Religion degenerated into the arts. All the immortal powers of man were thrown upon the production of a work of the imagination. The artist who had achieved a beautiful statue was almost worshipped; the poet who had produced a noble poem was the prophet of the nation; the man who gave the richest strains of melody was half divine. This was their inspiration. The arts became religion, and religion ended in the arts.

Hence, necessarily, sensuality became religious, because all feelings produced by these arts, chiefly the voluptuous ones, were authorized by religion. There is a peculiar danger in refinement of sensuous enjoyments. Coarse pleasures disgust, and pass for what they are; but who does not know that the real danger and triumph of voluptuousness are when it approaches the soul veiled under the drapery of elegance? They fancied themselves above the gross multitude: but their sensuality, disguised even from themselves, was sensuality still—ay, and at times even, in certain festivals, broke out into gross and unmistakable licentiousness.

And hence the greatest of the Greeks, in his imaginary republic, banished from that perfect state all the strains which were soft and enfeebling—all the poems that represented any deeds of deities unworthy of the Divine—all the statues which could suggest one single feeling of impurity. Himself a worshipper of the purest beautiful, it was yet given to his all but inspired heart to detect the lurking danger before which Greece was destined to fall—the approach of sensuality through the worship of the graceful and the refined.

There is this danger now. Men are awakened from coarse rude life to the desire of something deeper; and the god of spirit of this world can subtly turn that aside into channels which shall effectually enfeeble and ruin the soul. Refinement—melting imagery—dim religious light; all the witchery of form and color—music—architecture; all these, even colored with the hues of religion, producing feelings either religious or quasi-religious, may yet do the world's work. For all attempt to impress the heart through the senses, "to make perfect through the flesh," is fraught with that danger beneath which Greece sunk. There is a self-deception in those feelings—the thrill, and the sense of mystery, and the luxury of contemplation, and the impressions on the senses: all these lie very close to voluptuousness—enfeeblement of heart—yea, even impurity.

This, too, is the ruinous effect of an education of accomplishments. The education of the taste, and the cultivation of the feelings in undue proportion, destroy the masculine tone of mind. An education chiefly romantic or poetical, not balanced by hard practical life, is simply the ruin of the soul.

If any one ever felt the beauty of this world, it was He. The beauty of the lily nestling in the grass—He felt it all; but the beauty which He exhibited in life was the stern loveliness of moral action. The King in His Beauty "had no form or comeliness;" it was the beauty of obedience, of noble deeds, of unconquerable fidelity, of unswerving truth, of Divine self-devotion. The Cross! the Cross! We must have something of iron and hardness in our characters. The Cross tells us that is the true Beautiful which is Divine: an inward, not an outward beauty, which rejects and turns sternly away from the meretricious forms of the outward world, which have a corrupting or debilitating tendency.

IV. The worship of humanity. The Greek had strong human feelings and sympathies. He projected his own self on nature; humanized it; gave a human feeling to clouds, forests, rivers, seas.

In this he was a step above other idolatries. The Hindoo, for instance, worshipped monstrous emblems of physical power. Might—gigantic masses—hundred-handed deities, scarcely human, you find in Hindostan. In Egypt, again, life was the thing sacred. Hence all that had life was in a way divine—the sacred ibis, crocodile, bull, cat, snake. All that produced and all that ended life. Hence death too was sacred. The Egyptian lived in the contemplation of death. His coffin was made in his lifetime; his ancestors embalmed; the sacred animals preserved in myriad heaps through generations in mummy pits. The sovereign's tomb was built to last for, not centuries, but thousands of years.

The Greek was above this. It was not merely power, but human power; not merely beauty, but human beauty; not merely life, but human life, which was the object of his profoundest veneration. His effort therefore was, in his conception of his god, to realize a beautiful human being. And not the animal beauty of the human only, but the intelligence which informs and shines through beauty. All his life he was moulding into shape visions of earth—a glorious human being. Light under the conditions of humanity; the "sun in human limbs arrayed" was the central object of Grecian worship.

Much in this had a germ of truth—more was false. This principle, which is true, was evidently stated: The Divine, under the limitations of humanity, is the only worship of which man is capable. Demonstrably, for man can not conceive that which is not in his own mind. He may worship what is below himself, or that which is in himself resembling God; but attributes of which from his own nature he has no conception, he clearly can not adore.

The only question therefore is, *What* he shall reckon divine, and in alliance with God? If power, then he worships as the Hindoo; if life, then as the Egyptian; if physical and intellectual beauty, then as the Greek.

Observe, they wanted some living image of God containing something more truly divine to supplant their own. For still, in spite of their versatile and multifarious conceptions, the illimitable Unknown remained, to which an altar stood in Athens. They wanted humanity in its glory—they asked for a Son of Man.

Christ is Deity under the limitations of humanity. But there is presented in Christ for worship, not power, nor beauty, nor physical life, but the moral image of God's perfections. Through the heart, and mind, and character of Jesus it was that the Divinest streamed. Divine *character*, that was given in Christ to worship.

Another error. The Greek worshipped *all* that was in man. Every feeling had its beauty and its divine origin. Hence thieving had its patron deity, and treachery, and cunning; and lust had its temple erected for abominable worship. All that was human had its sanction in the example of some god.

Christ corrects this. Not all that is human is divine. There is a part of our nature kindred with God: the strengthening of that, by mixture with God's spirit, is our true and proper humanity—regeneration of soul. There is another part whereby we are related to the brutes: our animal propensities, our lower inclinations, our corrupted will. And whoever lives in that, and strengthens that, sinks not to the level of the brutes, but below them, to the level of the demons: for he uses an immortal spirit to degrade himself: and the immortal joined with evil, as the life to the body, is demoniacal.

In conclusion, remark, In all this system one thing was wanting—the sense of sin. The Greek worshipped the beautiful, adored the human, deified the world: of course this worship found no place for sin. The Greek would not have spoken to you of sin: he would have told you of departure from a right line; want of moral harmony; discord within: he would have said that the music of your soul was out of tune. Christ came to convince the world of sin. And after Him began to brood upon the hearts of Christendom that deep cloud that rests upon the conscience which has been called into vitality of action and susceptibility.

For this Greece had no remedy. The universe has no remedy but one. There is no prescription for the sickness of the heart, but that which is written in the Redeemer's blood.

XII.

SECOND ADVENT LECTURE.

THE ROMAN.

"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."—Rom. i. 14–16.

The Advent of Christ is the gulf which separates ancient from modern history. The dates B.C. and A.D. are not arbitrary but real division. His coming is the crisis of the world's history. It was the moment from whence light streamed into the realms of darkness, and life descended into the regions of the grave. It was the new birth of worn-out Humanity.

Last Thursday we considered the effects of this Advent on Greece. We found the central principle of Grecian life to be worldliness. The Greek saw, sought, and worshipped, nothing higher than this life, but only this life itself. Hence

Greek religion degenerated into mere taste, which is perception of the beautiful. The result on character was three-fold: Restlessness, which sent the Greek through this world with his great human heart unsatisfied, fickle in disposition, and ever inquiring, with insatiable curiosity, after some new thing. Licentiousness; for whosoever attaches his heart to the outward beauty, without worshipping chiefly in it that moral beauty of which all else is but the type and suggestion, necessarily, slowly, it may be, but inevitably, sinks down and down into the deepest abyss of sensual existence. Lastly, unbelief. The Greek, seeing principally this world, lost his hold upon the next. For the law of faith is, that a man can only believe what is already in his spirit. He believes as he is The Apostle Paul writes in astonishment to these Greeks (of Corinth), "How say some among you there is no resurrection of the dead?" But the thing was explicable. Paul was "dying daily." The outward life decayed; the inner grew and lived with more vitality every day. He *felt* the life to come in which he believed. But the Corinthians, leading an easy, luxurious life. how could it be a reality to them? How could *they* believe in immortality, in whom the immortal scarcely stirred, or only feebly? To these the apostle felt bound to preach the living Gospel. "I am debtor to the Greeks."

To-day, we turn to the Roman nation, its religion, and its life. At the time of which the New Testament speaks, Greece had been nearly a century and a half a province of Rome. In the language of Daniel, the kingdom of brass had given way to the kingdom of iron. The physical might of Rome had subdued Greece, but the mind of Greece had mastered Rome. The Greeks became the teachers of their conquerors. The deities of Greece were incorporated into the national faith of Rome. Greek literature became the education of the Roman youth. Greek philosophy was almost the only philosophy the Roman knew. Rome adopted Grecian arts, and was insensibly moulded by contact with Grecian life. So that the world in name and government was Roman, but in feeling and civilization Greek.

If, therefore, we would understand Roman life, we must contemplate it at an earlier period, when it was free from Greek influence, and purely exhibited its own idiosyncracies.

The nation which we contemplate to-day was a noble one —humanly, one of the noblest that the world has seen. Next to the Jewish, the very highest. We may judge from the fact of St. Paul's twice claiming his Roman citizenship, and feeling the indignation of a Roman citizen at the indig nity of chastisement. And this too in an age when the name had lost its brightness—when a luxurious, wealthy Greek could purchase his freedom. Claudius Lysias bought it "with a large sum of money." And yet we may conceive what it had been once, when even the faint lustre of its earlier dignity could inspire a foreigner, and that foreigner a Jew, and that Jew a Christian, with such respect.

At the outset, then, we have a rare and high-minded people and their life, to think of. They who have imbibed the spirit of its writers from their youth can neither speak nor think of it without enthusiasm. Scarcely can we forbear it even in the pulpit. Nor is this an unchristian feeling, earthly, to be checked; for in order to elevate Christianity, it is not necessary to vilify heathenism. To exalt revelation, we need not try to show that natural religion has no truths. To exhibit the blessings of the Advent, it is not needful to demonstrate that man was brutalized without it. It is a poor, cowardly system which can only rise by the degradation of all others. Whatever is true belongs to the kingdom of the truth. The purer the creed, the higher the character, the nobler the men who, without revelation, signally failed at last, the more absolute is the necessity of a Redeemer, and the more are we constrained to refer gratefully all blessings to His Advent.

We take three points: the public and private life of Rome, and its moral and inevitable decay at last.

I. The public life of Rome.

First, I notice the spirit of its religion. The very word shows what that was. *Religion*, a Roman word, means obligation, a binding power. Very different from the corresponding Greek expression, which implies worship by a sensuous ceremonial (threskeia).

The Roman began, like the Jew, from law. He started from the idea of duty. But there was an important difference. The Jew was taught duty or obedience to the law of a personal, holy God. The Roman obeyed, as his Etruscan ancestors taught him, a fate or will, and with very different results. But at present we only observe the lofty character of the early religion which resulted from such a starting-point.

The early history of Rome is wrapped in fable; but the fable itself is worth much, as preserving the spirit of the old life when it does not preserve the facts. Accordingly, the tradition taught that the building of Rome was done in obedience to the intimations of the will of Heaven. It was rebuilt in a site selected not by human prudence, but by a voice divinely guided. Its first great legislator (Numa) is represented as giving laws, not from a human heart, but after secret communion with the superhuman. It was the belief of Roman writers that the early faith taught access to God only through the mind; that therefore no images, but only temples, were found in Rome during the first two centuries of her existence. No bloody sacrifices defiled the city. War itself was a religious act; solemnly declared by a minister of religion casting a spear into the enemy's territory. Nay, we even find something in spirit resembling the Jewish sabbath; the command that during the rites of religion no traffic should go on, nor workman's hammer break the consecrated silence, but that men should devoutly contemplate God.

Here was a high, earnest, severe religion.

Now this resulted in government, as its highest earthly expression. Duty—and therefore law on earth—as a copy of the will of Heaven. Different nations seem, consciously or unconsciously, destined by God to achieve different missions. The Jew had the highest: to reveal to the world holiness. The Oriental stands as a witness to the reality of the Invisible above the Visible. The Greek reminded the world of eternal beauty; and the destiny of the Roman seems to have been to stamp upon the minds of mankind the ideas of law, government, order.

Beauty was not the object of the Roman contemplation, nor worship; nor was harmony. The taste for them might be taught, superinduced, but it was not natural. It was not indigenous to the soil of his nature. Hence, when Greece was reduced to a Roman province, in 146 B.C., the Roman soldiers took the noblest specimens of Grecian painting and converted them into gambling-tables.

You may distinguish the difference of the two characters from the relics which they have left behind them. The Greek produced a statue or a temple, the expression of a sentiment. The Roman, standing upon visible fact, dealing with the practical, and living in the actual life of men, has left behind him works of public usefulness: noble roads which intersect empires, mighty aqueducts, bridges, enormous excavations for draining cities at which we stand astonished; and, above all, that system of law, the slow result of ages of experience, which has so largely entered into the modern jurisprudence of most European nations.

One of their own writers has distinctly recognized this destiny. "It is for others to work brass into breathing shape — others may be more eloquent — or describe the circling movements of the heavens, and tell the rising of the stars. Thy work, O Roman! is to rule the nations: these be thine acts: to impose the conditions of the world's peace, to show mercy to the fallen, and to crush the proud."

In accordance with this, it is a characteristic fact that we find the *institutions* of Rome referred to inspiration. Not a decalogue of private duties, but a code of municipal laws. And, turning to the page of Scripture, whenever the Roman comes prominently forward, we always find him the organ of law, the instrument of public rule and order. Pilate has no idea of condemning unjustly: "Why, what evil hath He done?" But he yields at the mention of the source of law, the emperor. The Apostle Paul appeals to Cæsar, and even a corrupt Festus respects the appeal: "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go." Nor could even the prisoner's innocence reverse his own appeal: "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." The tumult at Ephesus is stilled by a hint of Roman interference: "We are in danger of being called in question for this day's uproar." When the angry crowd at Athens, and the equally angry mob of the Sanhedrim, was about to destroy Paul, again the Roman, Claudius Lysias, comes "with an army, and rescues him."

It was always the same thing. The Roman seems almost to have existed to exhibit on earth a copy of the Divine order of the universe, the law of the heavenly hierarchies.

II. Private life.

We observe the sanctity of the domestic ties. Very touching are all the well-known anecdotes: that, for instance, of the noble Roman matron, who felt, all spotless as she was, life-dishonored, and died by her own hand. The sacredness of home was expressed strongly by the idea of two guardian deities (Lares and Penates) who watched over it. A Roman's own fireside and hearth-stone were almost the most sacred spots on earth. There was no battle-cry that came so to his heart as that, "For the altar and the hearth." How firmly this was rooted in the nation's heart is plain from the tradition, that for 170 years no separation took place by law between those who had once been united in wedlock.

There is deep importance in this remark, for it was to this that Rome owed her greatness. The whole fabric of the Commonwealth rose out of the Family. The family was the nucleus round which all the rest agglomerated. First, the family; then the clan, made up of the family and its dependents or clients: then the tribe; lastly, the nation.

And so the noble structure of the Roman Commonwealth arose, compacted and mortised together, but resting on the foundation of the hearth-stone.

Very different is it in the East. A nation there is a collection of units, held together by a government. There is a principle of cohesion in them, but only such cohesion as belongs to the column of sand, supported by the whirlwind: when the blast ceases, the atoms fall asunder. When the chief is slain or murdered, the nation is in anarchy — the family does not exist. Polygamy and infanticide, the bane of domestic life, are the destruction, too, of national existence.

There is a solemn lesson in this. Moral decay in the family is the invariable prelude to public corruption. It is a false distinction which we make between public integrity and private honor. The man whom you can not admit into your family, whose morals are corrupt, can not be a pure statesman. Whoever studies history will be profoundly convinced that a nation stands or falls with the sanctity of its domestic ties. Rome mixed with Greece, and learned her morals. The Goth was at her gates; but she fell not till she was corrupted and tainted at the heart. The domestic corruption preceded the political. When there was no longer purity on her hearth-stones, nor integrity in her Senate, then, and not till then, her death-knell was rung.

We will bless God for our English homes. Partly the result of our religion; partly the result of the climate which God has given us, according to the law of compensation by which physical evil is repaid by moral blessing; so that, its gloom and darkness making life more necessarily spent within doors than it is among Continental nations, our life is domestic, and theirs is social. When England shall learn domestic maxims from strangers, as Rome from Greece, her ruin is accomplished. And this blessing, too, comes from Christ — who presided at the marriage-feast at Cana, who found a home in the family of Nazareth, and consecrated the hearth-stone with everlasting inviolability.

Let us break up this private life into particulars.

1. We find manly courage. This too is preserved in a word. Virtue is a Roman word — manhood, courage; for courage, manhood, virtue were one word. Words are fossil thoughts: you trace the ancient feeling in that word—you trace it, too, in the corruption of the word. Among the degenerate descendants of the Romans, *virtue* no longer means manhood; it is simply dilettantism. The decay of life exhibits itself in the debasement even of words.

We dwell on this courage, because it was not merely animal daring. Like every thing Roman, it was connected with religion. It was duty, obedience to will, self-surrender to the public good. The Roman legions subdued the world; but it was not their discipline alone, nor their strength, nor their brute daring. It was rather, far, their moral force—a nation whose legendary and historical heroes could thrust their hand into the flame, and see it consumed without a nerve shrinking; or come from captivity on parole, advise their countrymen against peace, and then go back to torture and certain death: or devote themselves by solemn self-sacrifice (like the Decii), who could bid sublime defiance to pain and count dishonor the only evil. The world must bow before such men; for unconsciously, here was a form of the spirit of the Cross — self-surrender, unconquerable fidelity to duty, sacrifice for others. And so far as Rome had in her that spirit, and so long as she had it, her career was the career of all those who in any form, even the lowest, take up the Cross: she went forth conquering and to conquer.

2. Deep as Roman greatness was rooted in the courage of her men, it was rooted deeper still in the honor of her women. I take one significant fact, which exhibits national feeling. There was a fire in Rome called eternal, forever replenished. It was the type and symbol of the duration of the Republic. This fire was tended by the Vestals—a beautifully significant institution. It implied that the duration of Rome was co-extensive with the preservation of her purity of morals. So long as the dignity of her matrons and her virgins remained unsullied, so long she would last. No longer. Female chastity guarded the Eternal City.

Here we observe something anticipative of Christianity. In the earlier ages after the Advent there were divine honors paid to the Queen of Heaven, and the land was covered over with houses set apart for celibacy. Of course, rude and gross minds can find plenty to sneer at in that institution, and doubtless the form of the truth was mistaken enough, as all *mere* forms of doctrine are. But the heart of truth which lay beneath all that superstition was a precious one. It was this. So long as purity of heart, delicacy of feeling, chastity of life, are found in a nation, so long that nation is great—no longer. Personal purity is the divinest thing in man and woman. It is the most sacred truth which the Church of Christ is commissioned to exhibit and proclaim.

Upon these virtues I observe: The Roman was conspicuous for the virtues of this earth—honor, fidelity, courage, chastity, all manliness; yet the apostle felt that he had a

Gospel to preach to them that were in Rome also. Moral virtues are not religious graces. There are two classes of excellence. There are men whose lives are full of moral principle, and there are others whose feelings are strongly devotional. And, strange to say, each of these is found at times disjoined from the other. Men of almost spotless earthly honor, who scarcely seem to know what reverence for things heavenly and devout aspirations towards God mean; men who have the religious instinct, pray with fervor, kindle with spiritual raptures, and yet are impure in their feelings, and fail in matters of common truth and honesty. Each of these is but a half man, dwarfed and stunted in his spiritual growth. The "perfect man in Christ Jesus," who has grown to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," is he who has united these two things: who, to the high Roman virtues which adorn this earth, has added the sublimer feelings which are the investiture of Heaven: in whom "justice, mercy, truth" are but the body of which the soul is faith and love.

Yet observe, these are moral virtues, and morality is not religion. Still, beware of depreciating them. Beware of talking contemptuously of "mere morality." If we must choose between two things which ought never to be divided, moral principle and religious sentiment, there is no question which most constitutes the character "which is not far from the kingdom of heaven." Devout feelings are common enough in childhood, religious emotions, religious warmth, instances of which are retailed by the happy parent; common enough, too, in grown men and women—but listen—those devout feelings, separate from high principle, do not save from immorality: nay, I do believe, are the very stepping-stone towards it. When the sensual is confounded with and mistaken for the spiritual; and merely devout warmth is the rich, rank soil of heart in which moral evil most surely and most rankly grows—you will not easily build Roman virtues upon *that*. But high principle, which is, in other words, the baptism of John, is the very basis on which is most naturally raised the superstructure of religious faith. Happy, thrice happy he who begins with the law and ends with the gospel.

III. The decline of Roman life.

1. First came corruption of the moral character. The Roman worldliness was of a kind far higher than the Grecian. In his way the Roman really had the world's good at heart. There was a something invisible at which he aimed:

invisible justice, invisible order, invisible right. Still it was only the law on earth—the well-being of this existence. And whatever is only of this earth is destined to decay. The soul of the Roman, bent on this world's affairs, became secularized, then animalized, and so at last, when there was little left to do, pleasure became his aim, as it had been the Grecian's. Then came ruin swiftly. When the emperors lived for their elaborately contrived life of luxury, when the Roman soldier left his country's battles to be fought by mercenaries, the doom of Rome was sealed. Yet, because it was a nobler worldliness, less sensual and less selfish, the struggle with decay was more protracted than in Greece. Lofty spirits rose to stem the tide of corruption, and the death-throes of Rome were long and terrible. She ran a mighty career of a thousand years.

2. Skepticism and superstition went hand in hand. An example of the former we have in Pilate's question, "What is truth?" An example of the latter in the superstitious belief of the inhabitants of Lystra that Paul and Barnabas were "gods come to them in the likeness of men." And this probably was a tolerably accurate picture of the state of Roman feeling. The lower classes sunk in a debased superstition—the educated classes, too intellectual to believe in it, and yet having nothing better to put in its stead. Or perhaps there was also a superstition which is only another name for skepticism: infidelity trembling at itself, shrinking from its own shadow. There is a fearful question for which the soul must find an answer—the mystery of its own being and destinies. Men looked into their own souls, and, listening, heard only an awful silence there. No response came from the world without. Philosophy had none to give. And then men, terrified at the progress of infidelity, more than half distrusting their own tendencies, took refuge in adding superstition to superstition. They brought in the gods of Greece, and Egypt, and the East: as if multiplying the objects of reverence strengthened the spirit of reverence in the soul; as if every new sacredness was a barrier between them and the dreadful abyss of uncertainty into which they did not dare to look.

This is as true now as then. Superstition is the refuge of a skeptical spirit, which has a heart too devout to dare to be skeptical. Men tremble at new theories, new views, the spread of infidelity, and they think to fortify themselves against these by multiplying the sanctities which they reverence. But all this will not do. Superstition can not do the work of faith, and give repose or peace. It is not by multiplying ceremonies—it is not by speaking of holy things with low, bated breath—it is not by entrenching the soul behind the infallibility of a church, or the infallibility of the words and sentences of a book—it is not by shutting out inquiry, and resenting every investigation as profane, that you can arrest the progress of infidelity. Faith, not superstition, is the remedy.

There is a grand fearlessness in faith. He who in his heart of hearts reverences the good, the true, the holy—that is, reverences God—does not tremble at the apparent success of attacks upon the outworks of his faith. They may shake those who rested on those outworks—they do not move him whose soul reposes on the truth itself. He needs no props or crutches to support his faith. He does not need to multiply the objects of his awe in order to keep dreadful doubt away. Founded on a Rock, Faith can afford to gaze undismayed at the approaches of Infidelity.

3. In Rome religion degenerated into allegiance to the State. In Greece, as it has been truly said, it ended in taste. In Rome it closed with the worship of the emperor. Nothing shows the contrast between Greek and Roman feeling more strongly than this. In Greece the poet became the prophet, and the artist was the man divinely inspired. In Rome the deification of the emperor, as the symbol of government, was the point towards which, unsuspected, but by a sure and inevitable consecutiveness, the national feeling for ages had been tending.

And the distinction between the Christian and the Roman tone of feeling is no less strikingly contrasted in the very same allegiance. Sacrament, perhaps, is the highest word of symbolical life in both. It is a Roman word. In Rome it meant an oath of allegiance to the Senate and Roman people. Nothing higher the Roman knew. In the Christian Church it is also the oath of highest fidelity; but its import there is this: "Here we offer and present unto thee, *O Lord*, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice."

In this contrast of the sacramental vows, as I have remarked before, were perceptible the different tendencies of the two starting-points of revealed religion and Roman. Judaism began from law or obligation to a holy person. Roman religion began from obedience to a mere will. Judaism ended in Christianity, whose central principle is joyful surrender to One whose name is Love. The religion of Rome ended, among the nobler, as Cato and the Antonines, in the fatalism of a sublime but loveless stoicism, whose essential spirit is submission to a destiny; among the ordinary men, in mere zeal for the state, more or less earthly. It stiffened into stoicism, or degenerated in public spirit.

4. The last step we notice is the decline of religion into expediency It is a startling thing to see men protecting popular superstitions which they despise; taking part with solemn gravity in mummeries which in their heart they laugh at. Yet such, we are told, was the state of things in Rome. It is a trite and often quoted observation of a great Roman, that one minister of religion could scarcely meet another without a smile upon his countenance, indicating consciousness of a solemn mockery. And an instance of this, I believe, we have in the Acts of the Apostles. The town-clerk or magistrate of Ephesus stilled the populace by a kind of accommodation to their prejudices much in the same way in which a nurse would soothe a passionate child. Apparently, as we are told, he belonged to the friends of Paul; and we can scarcely forbear a smile at the solemn gravity with which he assures the people that there could be no doubt that the image fell down from Jupiter: no question throughout all Asia and the world about the greatness of the "great goddess Diana."

For there were cultivated minds which had apprehended some of the truths of Christianity—philosophers who were enlightened far beyond their age. But a line of martyred philosophers had made them cautious. They made a compromise. They enjoyed their own light, kept silence, and left the rest in darkness. The result was destruction of their own moral being; for the law of truth is that it can not be shut up without becoming a dead thing, and mortifying the whole nature. Not the truth which a man knows, but that which he says and lives, becomes the soul's life. Truth can not bless except when it is lived for, proclaimed and suffered for.

This was the plan of the enlightened when the Saviour came. And this is the lowest step of a nation's fall, when the few who know the truth refuse to publish it; when governments patronize superstition as a mere engine for governing; when the ministers of religion only half believe the dogmas which they teach, dare not even say to one another what they feel and what they doubt; when they dare not be true to their convictions for fear of an Ephesian mob.

Therefore it was necessary that One should come into the world who should be true—the truest of all that are woman-born; whose life was truth; who from everlasting had been the truth. It was necessary that He should come to preach the Gospel to the poor, to dare to say to the people some truths which the philosophers dared not say, and other truths of which no philosopher had ever dreamed. The penalty of that true life was the sacrifice which is the world's Atonement. Men saw the Mortal die. But others saw the Immortal rise to take His place at the right hand of Power: and the Spirit which has been streaming out ever since from that life and death is the world's present Light, and shall be its everlasting Life.

XIII.

THIRD ADVENT LECTURE.

THE BARBARIAN.

"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously."—Acts xxviii. 1–7.

Of the four divisions of the world at the time of the Advent, two have already been reviewed. The Greek, seeing the right only on its side of beauty, ended in mere intellectual refinement. The artist took the place of God, and genius stood for inspiration. The Roman's destiny was different. His was not the kingdom of burnished brass, but the kingdom of iron. He set out with the great idea of duty and law: exhibited in consequence the austere simplicity of pure domestic life, in public affairs government and order: stamping upon the world the great idea of obedience to law. In the decline of Rome the results of this were manifest. After a mighty career of a thousand years Rome had run out her course. Among the loftier minds who stood out protesting against her corruption, and daring in a corrupted age to believe in the superiority of right to enjoyment, grand contempt for pleasure, sublime defiances of pain told out the dying agonies of the iron kingdom, worthy of the heart of steel which beat beneath the Roman's robe. This was stoi cism: the Grecian philosophy which took deepest root, as might have been expected, in the soil of Roman thought. Stoicism was submission to a destiny: hard, rigid, loveless submission. Its language was Must. It must be, and man's highest manliness is to submit to the inevitable. It is right because it must be so. Besides these higher ones, there were others who carried out the idea of duty in quite another direction. With the mass of the nation, reverence for law passed into homage to the symbol of law—loyalty to the Government; its highest expression being the sacramental homage to the nation's authority. So that, as I have already said, the Roman spirit stiffened into stoicism, and degenerated into worship of the emperor. This was not accidental, it was the inevitable result of the idea. It might have taken half the time, or ten times as long; but at last the germ must have ripened into that fruit and no other. The Roman began with obedience to will.

Law, meaning obedience to a holy God, passes by a natural transition into the Gospel: that is, reverential duty to a person becomes the obedience of love at last, which obeys because the beautifulness of obedience is perceived. The Jew began in severity, ended in beauty. The Roman began in severity, ended in rigidity, or else relaxation. To him the Advent came proclaiming the Lord of love instead of the coercive necessity of a lifeless fate.

To the Greek worshipper of beauty, the Advent came with an announcement of an inner beauty. He who was to them, and all such, "a Root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness," with nothing to captivate a refined taste, or gratify an elegant sensibility, lived a life which was divine and beautiful. His religion, as contrasted with the Grecian, supplementing it, and confirming in it what was true, "was the worship of the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

The third department is the necessity of the Advent for the Barbarian world.

By Barbarian was meant any religion but the Roman or the Greek—a contemptuous term, the spirit of which is common enough in all ages. Just as now every narrow sect monopolizes God, claims for itself an exclusive heaven, contemptuously looks on all the rest of mankind as sitting in outer darkness, and complacently consigns myriads whom God has made to His uncovenanted mercies, that is, to probable destruction, so, in ancient times, the Jew scornfully designated all nations but his own as Gentiles; and the Roman and Greek, each retaliating in his way, treated all nations but his own under the common epithet of Barbarians.

We shall confine ourselves to-day to a single case of barbarian life. We shall not enter into the religion of our own ancestors, the Celts and Teutonic nations, who were barbarians then, nor that of the Scythians or the Africans. One instance will be sufficient.

Twice in his recorded history St. Paul came in contact with barbarians—twice he was counted as a god. Once among the semi-barbarians of Lycaonia, at Lystra—once here at Melita.

There is a little uncertainty about the identification of this Melita. It was a name shared by two islands—Malta, and Melida in the Adriatic. But it seems to be established beyond all reasonable doubt that it was on Malta, not on Melida, that St. Paul was wrecked. The chief objection to this view is, that immediately before the wreck we are told—chap. xxvii. 27—that they were "driven up and down in Adria." But this is satisfactorily answered by the fact that the name Adriatic was applied often loosely to all the sea round Sicily. Two great arguments in favor of Malta then remain: After leaving the island, the apostle touched at Syracuse, and so went on to Rhegium and Puteoli. This is the natural direction from Malta to Rome, but not from Melida. Then besides, "barbarians" will not apply to the inhabitants of Melida. They were Greeks: whereas the natives of Malta, living under Roman government, were originally Carthaginians, who had been themselves a Phœnician colony. The epithet is perfectly correct as applied to them.

It is the Carthaginian or Phœnician religion, then, which moulded the barbarian life, that we examine to-day. We take three points.

I. Barbarian virtues.
II. Barbarian idea of retribution.
III. Barbarian conception of Deity.

I. Barbarian virtues. Two errors have been held on the subject of natural goodness. The first, that of those who deny to fallen man any goodness at all, and refuse to admit even kindliness of feeling. In the language of a celebrated and popular expounder of this view, "man in his natural state is one-half beast and one-half devil." This is the effect of a system. No man in his heart believes that. No mother ever gazed upon her child, baptized or unbaptized, and thought so. Men are better than their creed. Their hearts are more than a match for their false theological system. Beneath the black skin of the African there runs a blood as warm as that which is in the blue veins of the Christian

Among the civilized heathen, the instinctive feelings are as kindly and as exquisitely delicate as they were ever found in the bosom of the baptized. Accordingly, we find here these natural barbarian virtues of hospitality and sympathy. The shipwrecked mariners, wet and cold, were received in Melita with a warm, compassionate welcome. The people of the island did not *say*, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled." They gave them those things which were necessary for the body. And a Christian contemplating this, gave this distinct testimony, "The barbarous people showed us no little kindness."

The second error is the opposite one of placing too high a value on these natural virtues. There is a class of writers who talk much of early unsophisticated times. They tell of the days "when wild in woods the noble savage ran." They speak of pastoral simplicity, and the reverence and piety of mountain life. According to them, civilization is the great corrupter. But the truth is, the natural good feelings of human nature are only instincts: no more moral than a long sight or a delicate sense of hearing. The keen feelings of the child are no guaranty of future principle—perhaps rather the reverse. The profuse hospitality of the mountaineer, who rarely sees strangers, and to whom gold is little worth, becomes shrewd and selfish calculation so soon as temptation from passing traffic is placed in his way. You may travel among savages who treat you, as a stranger, with courtesy, but yet feed on the flesh of their enemies. And these Melitans, who "showed no little kindness" to the wrecked crew, belonged to a stock who, in the most civilized days of Carthage, offered human sacrifice, and after every successful battle with the Romans burnt the chief prisoners alive as a thank-offering to Heaven. If we trace them still farther back, we find their Phœnician ancestors in the Old Testament tainted with the same practice, and the Hebrews themselves imbibing it from them, so as to be perpetually arraigned by their prophets on the charge of making their sons and daughters "pass through the fire to Baal." They could be kind to strangers, and cruel to enemies.

The Advent of Christ brought a new spirit into the world. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That was not the new part. The Melitans would not have disagreed with that. . . . "As I have loved you, that ye love one another." "As I have loved you," . . . . that makes all new. So also 1 John ii. 7, 8. The "old commandment" was old enough. Barbarians felt in their hearts. But the same commandment with "true light" shining on it was different indeed.

"Love your neighbor, hate your enemy." Carthaginians obeyed that. Hear the law of love expounded by Himself. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. For if ye love them which love you, what do ye more than others? Do not even . . . (the barbarians) . . . the same?" This is Christianity—that is, the mind of Christ.

Remark, too, the principle on which this is taught. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Not upon merely personal authority; not by a law graven on stone, nor even printed in a book, to be referred to, chapter and verse; but on the principle of the imitation of God. His heart interpreted the universe—He read its "open secret," which is open to all who have the heart to feel it, secret to all others. A secret, according to Him, to be gathered from the rain as it fell on the just and the unjust, from the dew of heaven, from the lily, and from the fowls of the air, from the wheat, from every law and every atom. This was His revelation. He revealed God. He spelled for us the meaning of all this perplexing, unintelligible world. He proclaimed its hidden meaning to be Love. So He converted rude barbarian instincts into Christian graces—by expanding their sphere and purifying them of selfishness—causing them to be regulated by principle, and elevating them into a conscious imitation of God in His revealed character.

II. The Barbarian idea of retribution.

The Apostle Paul was one of those who are formed to be the leaders of the world. Foremost in persecution, foremost in Christianity ("nothing behind the chiefest apostles") foremost in the shipwreck, his voice the calmest, his heart the stoutest, his advice the wisest in the tumult; foremost, too, when all was over, not as a prisoner, but actively engaged for the general good, it is Paul who is gathering the sticks to make the fire. From those sticks a viper sprung and fastened on his hand, and the first impression of the barbarians was, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

This is the very basis of all natural religion—the idea of the connection between guilt and retribution. In some form or other it underlies all mythologies. The sleepless, never-dying avengers of wrong—the Nemesis who presides over retribution — the vengeance which suffereth not the murderer to live—the whips and scorpions of the Furies—it seems the first instinct of religion.

In the Barbarian conception of it, however, there was something gross, corporeal, and dangerous; because they misinterpreted natural laws into vengeance. Yet there is a proneness in man to judge so. We expect that nature will execute the chastisements of the spiritual world. Hence all nature becomes to the imagination leagued against the transgressor. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera; the wall of Siloam falls on guilty men; the sea will not carry the criminal, nor the plank bear him — the viper stings— every thing is a minister of wrath. On this conviction nations constructed their trial by ordeal. The guilty man's sword would fail in the duel, and the foot would strike and be burnt by the hot ploughshare. Some idea of this sort lurks in all our minds. We picture to ourselves the spectres of the past haunting the nightly bed of the tyrant. We take for granted that there is an avenger making life miserable.

But experience corrects all this. The tyrant's sleep is often as sweet and sound as the infant's. The sea will wreck an apostle, and bear a murderer triumphantly. The viper stings the innocent turf-cutter. The fang of evil pierces the heel of the noblest as he treads it down. It is the poetry of man's heart, not the reality of the universe, which speaks of the vengeance which pursues guilt with unrelenting steps to slay; only in poetry is this form of justice found; only in poetry does the fire refuse to burn the innocent; only in poetry can Purity lay her hand on the fawning lion's mane. If we ask where these Melitans got their idea of retribution, the reply is, out of their own hearts. They felt the eternal connection between wrong-doing and penalty. The penalty they would have executed on murder was death. They naturally threw this idea of theirs into the character of God, and blended together what was theirs and what is His. This is valuable as a proof of the instinctive testimony of man's heart to the realities of retribution. It is utterly worthless as a testimony to the form in which retributive justice works, because it is not borne out by the facts of life.

Again, that notion was false, in that it expected vengeance for flagrant crime only. "This man is a murderer." There is a common and superstitious feeling now to that effect, "Murder will out:" as if God had set a black mark on murder—as if, because it is unlikely to escape detection in a country where every man's hand is against the murderer, impunity was not common enough in countries where human life is held cheap. The truth is, we think much of crime, little of sin. There is many a murderer executed whose heart is pure and whose life is white, compared with those of many a man who lives a respectable and even honored life. David was a murderer. The Pharisees had committed no crime, but their heart was rotten at the core. There was in it the sin which has no forgiveness. It is not a Christian but a Barbarian estimate, which ranks crime above sin, and takes murder for the chief of sins marked out for Heaven's vengeance.

As information increased, *this* idea of retribution disappears. Natural laws are understood, and retribution vanishes. Then often comes Epicureanism or Atheism. "All things come alike to all: there is one end to the righteous and to the sinner; to the clean and to the unclean: to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." This is the feeling of the voluptuary of Ecclesiastes. If so, then the inference suggests itself to Epicurean indolence—"Let us eat and drink"—it is all the same. Or the skeptical feeling comes thus: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." For assuredly there is no vengeance such as this which suffers not the murderer to live, but arms the powers of nature against him. Therefore why do right instead of wrong?

Thus the idea of retribution is gone for those who see no deeper than the outward chance of penalty.

The Advent of Christ brought deeper and truer views. It taught what sin is, and what suffering is. It showed the Innocent on the Cross bearing the penalty of the world's sin, but Himself still the Son of God, with whom the Father was not angry, but "well pleased."

The penal agonies of sin are chiefly those which are executed within. "Vengeance," said the *Melitans*, "suffereth not the murderer to live." "Whosoever slayeth Cain," said *God*, "vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." Cain, the murderer, lives—*Christ*, the holy, dies. Cain is to us the dread type of hell. To live! *that* is hell, to live when you fain would die. There is such a thing as being salted with fire, a never annihilating but still consuming torture. You may escape the viper and the wreck. You may by prudence make this world painless, more or less. You can not escape yourself. Go where you will, you carry with you a soul degraded, its power lost, its finer sensibilities destroyed. Worse than the viper's tooth is the punishment of no longer striving after goodness, or aspiring after the life of God. Just as the man can not see through the glass on which he breathes, sin darkens the windows of the soul. You can not look out even to know the glories of the fair world from which your soul excludes itself There is no punishment equal to the punishment of being base. To sink from sin to sin, from infamy to infamy, that is the fearful retribution which is executed in the spiritual world. You are safe, go where you will, from the viper: as safe as if you were the holiest of God's children. The fang is in your soul.

III. The Barbarian conception of Deity.

When the viper fell off, and Paul was left uninjured, they changed their mind and said that he was a god.

Observe first, this implied a certain advance in religious notions. There is a stage of worship prior to that of man-worship. Man finds himself helpless among the powers of nature, and worships the forces themselves which he finds around him. This takes different forms. The highest is the worship of that host of heaven from which Job professed himself to be free. With some it is the adoration of lifeless things: the oak which has been made sacred by the lightning-stroke; the "meteoric stone" which fell down from Jupiter. So the Israelites adored the brazen serpent, with which power had once been in connection. Evidently there can be no holy influence in this. Men worship them by fear, fortify themselves by charms and incantations: do not try to please God by being holy, but defend themselves from danger by jugglery. The Christians of the early ages carried about bits of consecrated bread to protect themselves from shipwreck.

Besides this, men have worshipped brute life—some animal, exhibiting a limited quality, which is yet reckoned a type of the Divine. The hawk-eyed deities of Egypt, for instance, implied omniscience. Beast-worship was that of Egypt. Israel learned it there, and in an early stage of their history imitated the highest form which they knew, that of Apis, in their golden calf.

It is quite clear that the Melitans were in a stage beyond this. It is a step when men rise from the worship of lifeless things to that of animals—another when they rise to worship human qualities; for they *are* nearest the Divine. Perhaps a step higher still, when, like the early Romans, they worship a principle like Destiny, separate from all shape. They were in the stage of worshipping what is human.

2. But in this worship of the human we have to distinguish that it was the adoration of the marvellous, not the rever-

ence for the good. It was not Paul's character to which they yielded homage. It was only to the wonderful mystery of, as they supposed, miraculous escape. So, too, at Lystra. It was the miracle which they chiefly saw.

All that would pass away when they knew that he was a man of like passions with themselves, or when they were informed that it was a providential escape which might have happened to any ordinary man. When the savage sees the flash of European fire-arms he kneels as to a god; but when he has learned its use, his new religion is gone. When the Americans first saw the winged ships of Spain, they thought that the deities spoke in thunder; but when they discovered the secret of their humanity, the worship ceased. And thus science is every day converting the religion of mere wonder into Atheism. The mere worship of the mysterious has but a limited existence. As you teach laws, you undermine *that* religion. Men cease to tremble. The Laplander would no longer be awed by the eclipse if he knew how to calculate it with unerring accuracy. The savage's dread of lightning as the bolt of God, is over when he sees the philosopher draw it from the clouds, and experimentalize on it in his laboratory. The awe created by a pestilence is passed, when it is found to be strictly under the guidance of natural laws. And the Romanist, or the semi-Romanist, whose religion is chiefly a sense of the mysterious, the solemn, and the awful, and whose flesh creeps when he sees a miracle in the consecration of the sacraments, ends, as is well known, in infidelity, when enlightenment and reason have struck the ground of false reverence from beneath his feet.

It is upon this indisputable basis that the mightiest system of modern Atheism has been built. The great founder of that system divides all human history into three periods. The first, in which the Supernatural is believed in; and a personal agent is believed in as the cause of all phenomena. The second, in which metaphysical abstractions are assumed as Causes. The third, the Positive stage, in which nothing is expected but the knowledge of sequences by experience; the Absolute, that lies beneath all phenomena, being forever unknowable, and a God, if there be a God, undiscoverable by the intellect of man.

This conclusion is irrefragable. Granted that the only basis of religion is awe, a worship of the marvellous, then verily, there remains nothing for the human race to end in but blank and ghastly Atheism.

Therefore has the Redeemer's Advent taught a deeper truth to man. The Apostle Paul spoke almost slightingly of the marvellous. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Love is diviner than all wondrous powers.

So, too, the Son of God came into this world, depreciating the merely mysterious. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. No sign shall be given to it." "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Nay, His own miracles themselves, so far as the merely wondrous in them was concerned, He was willing, on one occasion at least, to place on the same level with the real or supposed ones of exorcists among themselves. "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" It was not the power, nor the supernatural in them, which proved them divine. It was their peculiar character—their benevolence, their goodness, their love—which manifested Deity.

Herein lies the vast fallacy of the French skeptic. The worship of the merely Supernatural must, as science progresses, legitimately end in Atheism. Yes, all science removes the Cause of causes farther and farther back from human ken, so that the baffled intellect is compelled to confess at last we can not find it. But "the world by wisdom knew not God." There is a power in the soul, quite separate from the intellect, which sweeps away or recognizes the marvellous, by which God is felt. Faith stands serenely far above the reach of the atheism of science. It does not rest on the wonderful, but on the eternal wisdom and goodness of God. The revelation of the Son was to proclaim a Father, not a mystery. No science can sweep away the everlasting love which the *heart* feels, and which the intellect does not even pretend to judge or recognize. And he is safe from the inevitable decay which attends the mere Barbarian worship, who has felt that as faith is the strongest power in the mind of man, so is love the divinest principle in the bosom of God· in other words, he who adores God as known in Christ, rather than trembles before the Unknown—whose homage is yielded to Divine Character rather than to Divine Power.

XIV.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—Gal. vi. 7, 8.

There is a close analogy between the world of nature and the world of spirit. They bear the impress of the same hand; and hence the principles of nature and its laws are the types and shadows of the Invisible. Just as two books, though on different subjects, proceeding from the same pen, manifest indications of the thought of one mind, so the worlds, visible and invisible, are two books written by the same finger, and governed by the same idea. Or rather, they are but one book, separated into two only by the narrow range of our ken. For it is impossible to study the universe at all without perceiving that it is one system. Begin with what science you will, as soon as you get beyond the rudiments, you are constrained to associate it with another.

You can not study agriculture long without finding that it absorbs into itself meteorology and chemistry: sciences run into one another till you get the "connection of the sciences;" and you begin to learn that one Divine idea connects the whole in one system of perfect order.

It was upon this principle that Christ taught. Truths come forth from His lips, not stated simply on authority, but based on the analogy of the universe. His human mind, in perfect harmony with the Divine mind with which it is mixed, discerned the connection of things, and read the Eternal Will in the simplest laws of nature. For instance, if it were a question whether God would give His Spirit to them that asked, it was not replied to by a truth revealed on His *authority;* the answer was derived from facts lying open to all men's observation. "Behold the fowls of the air"—"behold the lilies of the field"—learn from them the answer to your question. A principle was there. God supplies the wants which He has created. He feeds the ravens—He clothes the lilies—He will feed with His Spirit the craving spirits of His children.

It was on this principle of analogy that St. Paul taught in this text. He tells us that there is a law in nature according to which success is proportioned to the labor spent upon the work. In kind and in degree, success is attained in kind; for example, he who has sown his field with beechmast does not receive a plantation of oaks; a literary education is not the road to distinction in arms, but to success in letters; years spent on agriculture do not qualify a man to be an orator, but they make him a skillful farmer. Success, again, is proportioned to labor in degree, because, ordinarily, as is the amount of seed sown, so is the harvest: he who studies much will know more than he who studies little. In almost all departments it is "the diligent hand which maketh rich."

The keen eye of Paul discerned this principle reaching far beyond what is seen, into the spiritual realm which is unseen. As tare-seed comes up tares, and wheat-seed wheat; and as the crop in both cases is in proportion to two conditions, the labor and the quantity committed to the ground —so in things spiritual, too, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Not something else, but "*that.*" The proportion holds in kind—it holds, too, in degree, in spiritual things as in natural. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." If we could understand and rightly expound that principle, we should be saved from much of the disappointment and surprise which come from extravagant and unreasonable expectations. I shall try first to elucidate the principle which these verses contain, and then examine the two branches of the principle.

I. The principle is this, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

There are two kinds of good possible to men: one enjoyed by our animal being, the other felt and appreciated by our spirits. Every man understands more or less the difference between these two: between prosperity and well-doing—between indulgence and nobleness—between comfort and inward peace—between pleasure and striving after perfection —between happiness and blessedness. These are two kinds of harvest, and the labor necessary for them respectively is of very different kinds. The labor which procures the harvest of the one has no tendency to secure the other.

We will not depreciate the advantages of this world. It is foolish and unreal to do so. Comfort, affluence, success, freedom from care, rank, station—these are in their real way goods; only the labor bestowed upon them does not procure one single blessing that is spiritual.

On the other hand, the seed which is sown for a spiritual harvest has no tendency whatever to procure temporal well-being. Let us see what are the laws of the sowing and reaping in this department. Christ has declared them: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (with righteousness). "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." You observe, the beatific vision of the Almighty—fullness of righteousness—divine comfort. There is nothing earthly here—it is, spiritual results for spiritual labor. It is not said that the pure in heart shall be made rich; nor that they who hunger after goodness shall be filled with bread; nor that they who mourn shall rise in life and obtain distinction. Each department has its own appropriate harvest—reserved exclusively to its own method of sowing.

Every thing in this world has its price, and the price buys *that*, not something else. Every harvest demands its own preparation, and that preparation will not produce another sort of harvest. Thus, for example, you can not have at once the soldier's renown and the quiet of a recluse's life. The soldier pays his price for his glory—sows and reaps. His price is risk of life and limb, nights spent on the hard ground, a weather-beaten constitution. If you will not pay that price, you can not have what he has—military reputation. You can not enjoy the statesman's influence together with freedom from public notoriety. If you sensitively shrink from that, you must give up influence; or else pay his price—the price of a thorny pillow, unrest, the chance of being to-day a nation's idol, to-morrow the people's execration. You can not have the store of information possessed by the student, and enjoy robust health: pay his price, and you have his reward. His price is an emaciated frame, a debilitated constitution, a transparent hand, and the rose taken out of the sunken cheek. To expect these opposite things: a soldier's glory and quiet, a statesman's renown and peace, the student's prize and rude health, would be to mock God, to reap what has not been sowed.

Now the mistakes men make, and the extravagant expectations in which they indulge, are these: they sow for earth, and expect to win spiritual blessings, or they sow to the Spirit, and then wonder that they have not a harvest of the good things of earth. In each case they complain, What have I done to be treated so?

The unreasonableness of all this appears the moment we have understood the conditions contained in this principle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap."

It is a common thing to hear sentimental wonderings about the unfairness of the distribution of things here. The unprincipled get on in life, the saints are kept back. The riches and rewards of life fall to the lot of the undeserving. The rich man has his good things, and Lazarus his evil things. Whereupon it is taken for granted that there must be a future life to make this fair: that if there were none, the constitution of this world would be unjust. That is, that because a man who has sown to the Spirit does not reap to the flesh here, he will hereafter; that the meed of well-doing must be somewhere in the universe the same kind of recompense which the rewards of the unprincipled were here—comfort, abundance, physical enjoyment—or else all is wrong.

But if you look into it, the balance is perfectly adjusted even here. God has made his world much better than you and I could make it. Every thing reaps its own harvest, every act has its own reward. And before you covet the enjoyment which another possesses, you must first calculate the cost at which it was procured.

For instance, the religious tradesman complains that his honesty is a hindrance to his success: that the tide of custom pours into the doors of his less scrupulous neighbors in the same street, while he himself waits for hours idle. My brother, do you think that God is going to reward honor, integrity, high-mindedness, with this world's coin? Do you fancy that He will pay spiritual excellence with plenty of custom? Now, consider the price that man has paid for his success. Perhaps mental degradation and inward dishonor. His advertisements are all deceptive; his treatment of his workmen tyrannical; his cheap prices made possible by inferior articles. Sow that man's seed, and you will reap that man's harvest. Cheat, lie, advertise, be unscrupulous in your assertions, custom will come to you. But if the price is too dear, let him have his harvest, and take yours; yours is a clear conscience, a pure mind, rectitude within and without. Will you part with that for his? Then why do you complain? He has paid his price, you do not choose to pay it.

Again, it is not an uncommon thing to see a man rise from insignificance to sudden wealth by speculation. Within the last ten or twenty years England has gazed on many such a phenomenon. In this case, as in spiritual things, the law seems to hold: He that hath, to him shall be given. Tens of thousands soon increase and multiply to hundreds of thousands. His doors are besieged by the rich and great. Royalty banquets at his table, and nobles court his alliance. Whereupon some simple Christian is inclined to complain: "How strange that so much prosperity should be the lot of mere cleverness!"

Well, are these really God's chief blessings? Is it for such as these you serve Him? And would these indeed satisfy your soul? Would you have God reward his saintliest with these gauds and gewgaws—all this trash—rank, and wealth, and equipages, and plate, and courtship from the needy great? Call you *that* the heaven of the holy? Compute now what was paid for that? The price that merchant-prince paid, perhaps with the blood of his own soul, was shame and guilt. The price he is paying now is perpetual dread of detection; or worse still, the hardness which can laugh at detection; or one deep lower yet, the low and grovelling soul which can be satisfied with these things as a paradise, and ask no higher. He has reaped enjoyment—yes, and he has sown, too, the seed of infamy.

It is all fair. Count the cost. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." Save your life if you like, but do not complain if you lose your nobler life—yourself: win the whole world, but remember you do it by losing your own soul. Every sin must be paid for; every sensual indulgence is a harvest, the price for which is so much ruin for the soul. "*God is not mocked.*"

Once more, religious men in every profession are surprised to find that many of its avenues are closed to them. The conscientious churchman complains that his delicate scruples or his bold truthfulness stand in the way of his preferment; while another man, who conquers his scruples or softens the eye of truth, rises, and sits down a mitred peer in Parliament. The honorable lawyer feels that his practice is limited, while the unprincipled practitioner receives all he loses; and the Christian physician feels sore and sad at perceiving that charlatanism succeeds in winning employment; or, if not charlatanism, at least that affability and courtly manners take the place that is due to superior knowledge.

Let such men take comfort, and judge fairly. Popularity is one of the things of an earthly harvest for which quite earthly qualifications are required. I say not always dishonorable qualifications, but a certain flexibility of disposition; a certain courtly willingness to sink obnoxious truths, and adapt ourselves to the prejudices of the minds of others; a certain adroitness at catching the tone of those with whom we are. Without some of these things no man can be popular in any profession.

But you have resolved to be a liver—a doer—a champion of the truth. Your ambition is to be pure in the last recesses of the mind. You have your reward: a soul upright and manly—a fearless bearing, that dreads to look no man in the face—a willingness to let men search you through and through, and defy them to see any difference between what you seem and what you are. Now, your price: your price is dislike. The price of being true is the Cross. The warrior of the truth must not expect success. What have you to do with popularity? Sow for it, and you will have it. But if you wish for it, or wish for peace, you have mistaken your calling; you must not be a teacher of the truth; you must not cut prejudice against the grain: you must leave medical, legal, theological truth, to harder and nobler men, who are willing to take the martyr's cross, and win the martyr's crown.

This is the mistake men make. They expect both harvests, paying only one price. They would be blessed with goodness and prosperity at once. They would have that on which they bestowed no labor. They take sinful pleasure, and think it very hard that they must pay for it in agony, and worse than agony, souls deteriorated. They would monopolize heaven in their souls, and the world's prizes at the same time. This is to expect to come back, like Joseph's brethren from the land of plenty, with the corn in their sacks, and the money returned, too, in their sacks' mouths. No, no; it will not do. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Reap *what* you have sown. If you sow the wind, do not complain if your harvest is the whirlwind. If you sow to the Spirit, be content with a spiritual reward: invisible—within: "more life and higher life."

II. Next, the two branches of the application of this principle.

First: He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. There are two kinds of life: one of the flesh, another of the spirit. Amidst the animal and selfish desires of our nature there is a voice which clearly speaks of duty, right, perfection. This is the Spirit of Deity in man; it is the life of God in the soul. This is the evidence of our divine parentage.

But there is a double temptation to live the other life instead of this. First, the desires of our animal nature are *keener* than those of our spiritual. The cry of Passion is louder than the calm voice of Duty. Next, the reward in the case of our sensitive nature is given *sooner*. It takes less time to amass a fortune than to become heavenly-minded. It costs less to indulge an appetite than it does to gain the peace of lulled passion. And hence, when men feel that for the spiritual blessing, the bread must be cast upon the waters which shall not be found until after many days (skepticism whispers "never!"), it is quite intelligible why they choose the visible and palpable, instead of the invisible advantage, and plan for an immediate harvest rather than a distant one.

The other life is that of the flesh. The "flesh" includes all the desires of our unrenewed nature — the harmless as well as sinful. Any labor, therefore, which is bounded by present well-being is *sowing* to the flesh—whether it be the gratification of an immediate impulse, or the long-contrived plan reaching forward over many years. Sowing to the flesh includes, therefore,

1. Those who live in open riot. He sows to the flesh who pampers its unruly animal appetites. Do not think that I speak contemptuously of our animal nature, as if it were not human and sacred. The lowest feelings of our nature become sublime by being made the instruments of our nobler emotions. Love, self-command, will elevate them all; and to ennoble and purify, not to crush them, is the long, slow work of Christian life. Christ, says St. Paul, is the Saviour of the body. But if, instead of subduing these to the life of the Spirit, a man gives to them the rein and even the spur, the result is not difficult to foresee. There are men who do this. They "make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." They whet the appetites by indulgence. They whip the jaded senses to their work. Whatever the constitutional bias may be, anger, intemperance, epicurism, indolence, desires, there are societies, conversations, scenes, which supply fuel for the flame, as well as opposite ones which cut off the nutriment. To indulge in these, knowing the result, is to foster the desire which brings forth the sin which ends in death. This is "sowing to the flesh."

If there be one to whom these words which I have used, veiled in the proprieties due to delicate reserve, are not without meaning, from this sentence of God's word let him learn his doom. He is looking forward to a harvest wherein he may reap the fruit of his present anticipations. And he *shall* reap it. He shall have his indulgence, he shall enjoy his guilty rapture, he shall have his unhallowed triumph;

and the boon companions of his pleasures shall award him the meed of their applause. He has sown the seed, and in fair requital he shall have his harvest. It is all fair. He *shall* enjoy. But tarry a while: the law hath yet another hold upon him. This deep law of the whole universe goes farther. He has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he has reaped pleasure; he has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he shall reap corruption. That is, in his case, the ruin of the soul. It is an awful thing to see a soul in ruins: like a temple which once was fair and noble, but now lies overthrown, matted with ivy, weeds, and tangled briers, among which things noisome crawl and live. He shall reap the harvest of disappointment — the harvest of bitter, useless remorse. The crime of sense is avenged by sense, which wears by time. He shall have the worm that gnaws, and the fire that is not quenched. He shall reap the fruit of long-indulged desires, which have become tyrannous at last, and constitute him his own tormentor. His harvest is a soul in flames, and the tongue that no drop can cool. Passions that burn, and appetites that crave, when the power of enjoyment is gone. He has sowed to the flesh. " God is not mocked." The man reaps.

2. There is a less gross way of sowing to the flesh. There are men of sagacity and judgment in the affairs of this life whose penetration is almost intuitive in all things where the step in question involves success or failure here. They are those who are called in the parable the children of this world, wise in their generation. They moralize and speculate about eternity, but do not plan for it. There is no seed sown for an invisible harvest. If they think they have sown for such a harvest, they might test themselves by the question, What would they lose if there were to be no eternity? For the children of God, so far as earth is concerned, " If in this life only they have hope in Christ, then are they of all men most miserable." But *they* — these sagacious, prudent men of this world—they have their reward. What have they ventured, given up, sacrificed, which is all lost forever, if this world be all? What have they buried like seed in the ground, lost forever, if there be no eternity?

Now we do not say these men are absolutely wicked. We distinguish between their sowing to the flesh, and the sowing of those profligates last spoken of. All we say is, there is " corruption " written on their harvest. It was for earth, and with earth it perishes. It may be the labor of the statesman, planning, like the Roman of old, the government and order of the kingdoms of the earth; or that of the astronomer, weighing suns, prescribing rules of return to comets, and dealing with things above earth in space, but unspiritual still; or that of the son of a humbler laboriousness, whose work is merely to provide for a family: or, lastly, the narrower range of the man of pleasure, whose chief care is where he shall spend the next season, in what metropolis, or which watering-place, or how best enjoy the next entertainment.

All these are objects more or less harmless. But they end. The pyramid crumbles into dust at last. The mighty empire of the eternal city breaks into fragments which disappear. The sowers for earth *have* their harvest here: Success in their schemes—quiet intellectual enjoyment—exemption from pain and loss—the fruits of worldly-wise sagacity. And that is all. "When the breath goeth forth, they return to their dust, and all their thoughts perish." The grave is not to them the gate of paradise, but simply the impressive mockery which the hand of death writes upon that body for which they lived, and with which all is gone. They reap corruption, for all they have toiled for decays!

Ye that lead the life of respectable worldliness, let these considerations arrest your indifference to the Gospel. You have sown for earth. Well. And then—what? Hear the Gospel, which tells of a Saviour whose sacrifice is the world's life—whose death is the law of life; from whose resurrection streams a Spirit which can change carnal into spiritual men—whose whole existence, reflecting God, was the utterance of the Divine truth and rule of heavenly life, the blessedness of giving. To live so, and to believe so, is to sow to the Spirit.

Lastly, sowing to the Spirit. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

What is meant by sowing to the Spirit here is plain. "Let us not be weary in well-doing," says the apostle directly after: "for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." *Well-doing:* not faith, but works of goodness, were the sowing that he spoke of.

There is proclaimed here the rewardableness of works. So in many other passages: "Abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "Laying up a good foundation for the time to come,' was the reason alleged for charging rich men to be willing to give; and so all through. There is an irreversible principle. The amount of harvest is proportioned to the seed sown exactly. There are degrees of glory. The man who gives out of his abundance has one blessing. She who gives the mite, all she had, even all her living, has another, quite different.

The rectitude of this principle, and what it is, will be plainer from the following considerations:

1. The harvest is life eternal. But eternal life here does not simply mean a life that lasts forever. That is the destiny of the *soul*—all souls, bad as well as good. But the bad do not enter into this "eternal life." It is not simply the duration, but the quality of the life which constitutes its character of eternal. A spirit may live forever, yet not enter into this. And a man may live but for five minutes the life of Divine benevolence, or desire for perfectness: in those five minutes he has entered into the life which is eternal—never fluctuates, but is the same unalterably, forever in the life of God. *This* is the reward.

2. The reward is not arbitrary, but natural. God's rewards and God's punishments are all natural. Distinguish between arbitrary and natural. Death is an arbitrary punishment for forgery: it might be changed for transportation. It is not naturally connected. It depends upon the will of the law-maker. But trembling nerves are the direct and natural results of intemperance. They are, in the order of nature, the results of wrong-doing. The man reaps *what* he has sown. Similarly in rewards. If God gave riches in return for humbleness, that would be an arbitrary connection. He did give such a reward to Solomon. But when He gives life eternal, meaning by life eternal not duration of existence but heavenly quality of existence, as explained already, it is all natural. The seed sown in the ground contains in itself the future harvest. The harvest is but the development of the germ of life in the seed. A holy act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap." He that sows much, thereby becomes more conformed to God than he was before—in heart and spirit. That is his reward and harvest. And just as among the apostles there was one whose spirit, attuned to love, made him emphatically the disciple whom Jesus loved, so shall there be some who, by previous discipline of the Holy Ghost, shall have more of His mind, and understand more of His love, and drink deeper of His joy than others—they that have sowed bountifully.

Every act done in Christ receives its exact and appropriate reward. They that are meek shall inherit the earth. They that are pure shall see God. They that suffer shall reign with Him. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever. They that receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man—that is, because he is a righteous man—shall receive a righteous man's reward. Even the cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward.

It will be therefore seen at once, reward is not the result of merit. It is, in the order of grace, the natural consequence of well-doing. It is life becoming more life. It is the soul developing itself. It is the Holy Spirit of God in man making itself more felt, and mingling more and more with his soul, felt more consciously with an ever-increasing heaven. You reap what you sow—not something else, but that. An act of love makes the soul more loving. A deed of humbleness deepens humbleness. The thing reaped is the very thing sown, multiplied a hundred-fold. You have sown a seed of life, you reap life everlasting.

XV.

THE LONELINESS OF CHRIST.

"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."—John xvi. 31, 32.

There are two kinds of solitude: the first consisting of insulation in space, the other of isolation of the spirit. The first is simply separation by distance. When we are seen, touched, heard by none, we are said to be alone. And all hearts respond to the truth of that saying, This is not solitude; for sympathy can people our solitude with a crowd. The fisherman on the ocean alone at night is not alone when he remembers the earnest longings which are arising up to heaven at home for his safety; the traveller is not alone when the faces which will greet him on his arrival seem to beam upon him as he trudges on; the solitary student is not alone when he feels that human hearts will respond to the truths which he is preparing to address to them.

The other is loneliness of soul. There are times when hands touch ours, but only send an icy chill of unsympathizing indifference to the heart: when eyes gaze into ours, but with a glazed look which can not read into the bottom of our souls—when words pass from our lips, but only come back as an echo reverberated without replying through a dreary solitude—when the multitude throng and press us, and we can not say, as Christ said, "Somebody hath *touched* me:"

for the contact has been not between soul and soul, but only between form and form.

And there are two kinds of men who feel this last solitude in different ways. The first are the men of self-reliance: self-dependent—who ask no counsel, and crave no sympathy—who act and resolve alone—who can go sternly through duty, and scarcely shrink, let what will be crushed in them. Such men command respect; for whoever respects himself constrains the reverence of others. They are invaluable in all those professions of life in which sensitive feeling would be a superfluity; they make iron commanders; surgeons who do not shrink; and statesmen who do not flinch from their purpose for the dread of unpopularity. But mere self-dependence is weakness, and the conflict is terrible when a human sense of weakness is felt by such men.

Jacob was alone when he slept in his way to Padan-aram, the first night that he was away from his father's roof, with the world before him, and all the old associations broken up, and Elijah was alone in the wilderness when the court had deserted him, and he said, "They have digged down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." But the loneliness of the tender Jacob was very different from that of the stern Elijah. To Jacob the sympathy he yearned for was realized in the form of a simple dream. A ladder raised from earth to heaven figured the possibility of communion between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. In Elijah's case, the storm, and the earthquake, and the fire did their convulsing work in the soul, before a still, small voice told him that he was not alone. In such a spirit the sense of weakness comes with a burst of agony, and the dreadful conviction of being alone manifests itself with a rending of the heart of rock. It is only so that such souls can be taught that the Father is with them, and that they are not alone.

There is another class of men who live in sympathy. These are affectionate minds which tremble at the thought of being alone: not from want of courage, nor from weakness of intellect comes their dependence upon others, but from the intensity of their affections. It is the trembling spirit of humanity in them. They want not aid, nor even countenance, but only sympathy. And the trial comes to them not in the shape of fierce struggle, but of chill and utter loneliness, when they are called upon to perform a duty on which the world looks coldly, or to embrace a truth which has not found lodgment yet in the breasts of others.

It is to this latter and not to the former class that we must look if we would understand the spirit in which the words of the text were pronounced. The deep humanity of the soul of Christ was gifted with those finer sensibilities of affectionate nature which stand in need of sympathy. He not only gave sympathy, but wanted it too, from others. He who selected the gentle John to be his friend—who found solace in female sympathy, attended by the women who ministered to him out of their substance—who in the trial-hour could not bear even to pray without the human presence—which is the pledge and reminder of God's presence—had nothing in Him of the hard, merely self-dependent character. Even this verse testifies to the same fact. A stern spirit never could have said, "I am not alone; the Father is with Me;" never would have felt the loneliness which needed the balancing truth. These words tell of a struggle—an inward reasoning—a difficulty and a reply—a sense of solitude—"I shall be alone;" and an immediate correction of that, "not alone—the Father is with Me."

There is no thought connected with the life of Christ more touching, none that seems so peculiarly to characterize His spirit, than the solitariness in which He lived. Those who understood Him best only half understood Him. Those who knew Him best scarcely could be said to *know* Him. On this occasion the disciples thought—Now we do understand—now we believe. The lonely spirit answered, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone."

Very impressive is that trait in His history. He was in this world alone.

I. First, then, we meditate on the loneliness of Christ.
II. On the temper of His solitude.

1. The loneliness of Christ was caused by the Divine elevation of His character. His infinite superiority severed Him from sympathy; His exquisite affectionateness made that want of sympathy a keen trial.

There is a second-rate greatness which the world can comprehend. If we take two who are brought into direct contrast by Christ Himself, the one the type of human, the other that of Divine excellence, the Son of Man and John the Baptist, this becomes clearly manifest. John's life had a certain rude, rugged goodness, on which was written, in characters which required no magnifying-glass to read, spiritual excellence. The world, on the whole, accepted him. Pharisees and Sadducees went to his baptism. The people idolized him as a prophet; and if he had not chanced to cross the path of a weak prince and a revengeful woman, we can see no reason why John might not have finished his course with joy, recognized as irreproachable. If we inquire why it was that the world accepted John and rejected Christ, one reply appears to be that the life of the one was finitely simple and one-sided, that of the other divinely complex.

In physical nature, the naturalist finds no difficulty in comprehending the simple structure of the lowest organizations of animal life, where one uniform texture and one organ performing the office of brain and heart and lungs, at once leave little to perplex. But when he comes to study the complex anatomy of man, he has the labor of a lifetime before him. It is not difficult to master the constitution of a single country; but when you try to understand the universe, you find infinite appearances of contradiction: law opposed by law—motion balanced by motion—happiness blended with misery: and the power to elicit a divine order and unity out of this complex variety is given to only a few of the gifted of the race. That which the structure of man is to the structure of the limpet—that which the universe is to a single country—the complex and boundless soul of Christ was to the souls of other men.

Therefore, to the superficial observer, His life was a mass of inconsistencies and contradictions. All thought themselves qualified to point out the discrepancies. The Pharisees could not comprehend how a holy teacher could eat with publicans and sinners. His own brethren could not reconcile His assumption of a public office with the privacy which He aimed at keeping. "If thou doest these things, show thyself to the world." Some thought He was "a good man," others said, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people." And hence it was that He lived to see all that acceptance which had marked the earlier stage of His career, as for instance at Capernaum, melt away. First the Pharisees took the alarm; then the Sadducees; then the political party of the Herodians; then the people. That was the most terrible of all: for the enmity of the upper classes is impotent; but when that cry of brute force is stirred from the deeps of society, as deaf to the voice of reason as the ocean in its strength churned into raving foam by the winds, the heart of mere earthly oak quails before that. The apostles, at all events, did quail. One denied, another betrayed, all deserted. They "were scattered, each to his own:" and the Truth Himself was left alone in Pilate's judgment-hall.

Now learn from this a very important distinction. To feel solitary is no uncommon thing. To complain of being alone, without sympathy and misunderstood, is general enough. In every place, in many a family, these victims of diseased sensibility are to be found, and they might find a weakening satisfaction in observing a parallel between their own feelings and those of Jesus. But before that parallel is assumed, be very sure that it is, as in His case, the elevation of your character which severs you from your species. The world has small sympathy for Divine goodness; but it also has little for a great many other qualities which are disagreeable to it. You meet with no response—you are passed by—find yourself unpopular—meet with little communion. Well; is that because you are *above* the world, nobler, devising and executing grand plans which they can not comprehend—vindicating the wronged, proclaiming and living on great principles—offending it by the saintliness of your purity, and the unworldliness of your aspirations? Then yours is the loneliness of Christ. Or is it that you are wrapped up in self—cold, disobliging, sentimental, indifferent about the welfare of others, and very much astonished that they are not deeply interested in you? *You* must not use these words of Christ. They have nothing to do with you.

Let us look at one or two of the occasions on which this loneliness was felt.

The first time was when He was but twelve years old, when His parents found Him in the temple, hearing the doctors and asking them questions. High thoughts were in the child's soul: expanding views of life; larger views of duty and His own destiny.

There is a moment in every true life—to some it comes very early—when the old routine of duty is not large enough—when the parental roof seems too low, because the Infinite above is arching over the soul—when the old formulas in creeds, catechisms, and articles seem to be narrow, and they must either be thrown aside, or else transformed into living and breathing realities—when the earthly father's authority is being superseded by the claims of a Father in heaven.

That is a lonely, lonely moment, when the young soul first feels God; when this earth is recognized as an "awful place, yea, the very gate of heaven;" when the dream-ladder is seen planted against the skies, and we wake, and the dream haunts us as a sublime reality.

You may detect the approach of that moment in the young man or the young woman by the awakened spirit of inquiry: by a certain restlessness of look, and an eager ear nestness of tone—by the devouring study of all kinds of books—by the waning of your own influence, while the inquirer is asking the truth of the doctors and teachers in the vast temple of the world—by a certain opinionativeness, which is austere and disagreeable enough; but the austerest moment of the fruit's taste is that in which it is passing from greenness into ripeness. If you wait in patience, the sour will become sweet. Rightly looked at, that opinionativeness is more truly anguish: the fearful solitude of feeling the insecurity of all that is human; the discovery that life is real, and many forms of social and religious existence hollow. The old moorings are torn away, and the soul is drifting, drifting, drifting, very often without compass, except the guidance of an unseen hand, into the vast infinite of God. Then come the lonely words, and no wonder, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

2. That solitude was felt by Christ in trial. In the desert, in Pilate's judgment-hall, in the garden, He was alone—and alone must every son of man meet his trial-hour. The individuality of the soul necessitates that. Each man is a new soul in this world; untried, with a boundless possible before him. No one can predict what he may become, prescribe his duties, or mark out his obligations. Each man's own nature has its own peculiar rules; and he must take up his life-plan alone, and persevere in it in a perfect privacy with which no stranger intermeddleth. Each man's temptations are made up of a host of peculiarities, internal and external, which no other mind can measure. You are tried alone—alone you pass into the desert—alone you must bear and conquer in the agony—alone you must be sifted by the world. There are moments known only to a man's own self, when he sits by the poisoned springs of existence "yearning for a morrow which shall free him from the strife." And there are trials more terrible than that. Not when vicious inclinations are opposed to holy, but when virtue conflicts with virtue, is the real rending of the soul in twain. A temptation in which the lower nature struggles for mastery can be met by the whole united force of the spirit. But it is when obedience to a heavenly Father can be only paid by disobedience to an earthly one; or fidelity to duty can be only kept by infidelity to some entangling engagement; or the straight path must be taken over the misery of others; or the counsel of the affectionate friend must be met with a "Get thee behind me, Satan," oh, it is then, when human advice is unavailable, that the soul feels what it is to be alone.

Once more — the Redeemer's soul was alone in dying. The hour had come—they were all gone, and He was, as He predicted, left alone. All that is human drops from us in that hour. Human faces flit and fade, and the sounds of the world become confused. "I shall die alone"—yes, and alone you live. The philosopher tells us that no atom in creation touches another atom—they only approach within a certain distance; then the attraction ceases, and an invisible something repels—they only *seem* to touch. No soul touches another soul except at one or two points; and those chiefly external—a fearful and a lonely thought, but one of the truest of life. Death only realizes that which has been the fact all along. In the central deeps of our being we are alone.

II. The spirit or temper of that solitude.

1. Observe its grandeur. I am alone, yet not alone. There is a feeble and sentimental way in which we speak of the Man of Sorrows. We turn to the cross, and the agony, and the loneliness, to touch the softer feelings, to arouse compassion. You degrade *that* loneliness by your compassion. Compassion! compassion for Him! Adore if you will—respect and reverence that sublime solitariness with which none but the Father was—but no pity; let it draw out the firmer and manlier graces of the soul. Even tender sympathy seems out of place.

For even in human things, the strength that is in a man can be only learnt when he is thrown upon his own resources and left alone. What a man can do in conjunction with others does not test the man. Tell us what he can do alone. It is one thing to defend the truth when you know that your audience are already prepossessed, and that every argument will meet a willing response; and it is another thing to hold the truth when truth must be supported, if at all, alone—met by cold looks and unsympathizing suspicion. It is one thing to rush on to danger with the shouts and the sympathy of numbers; it is another thing when the lonely chieftain of the sinking ship sees the last boatful disengage itself, and folds his arms to go down into the majesty of darkness, crushed, but not subdued.

Such and greater far was the strength and majesty of the Saviour's solitariness. It was not the trial of the lonely hermit. There is a certain gentle and pleasing melancholy in the life which is lived alone. But there are the forms of nature to speak to him, and he has not the positive opposition of mankind if he has the absence of actual sympathy. It is a solemn thing, doubtless, to be apart from men, and to feel eternity rushing by like an arrowy river. But the solitude of Christ was the solitude of a crowd. In that single human bosom dwelt the thought which was to be the germ of the world's life: a thought unshared, misunderstood, or rejected. Can you not feel the grandeur of those words, when the Man reposing on His solitary strength, felt the last shadow of perfect isolation pass across His soul: "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me?"

Next, learn from these words self-reliance. "Ye shall leave me alone." Alone, then, the Son of man was content to be. He threw Himself on His own solitary thought; did not go down to meet the world, but waited, though it might be for ages, till the world should come round to Him. He appealed to the future; did not aim at seeming consistent; left His contradictions unexplained; "I came from the Father, I leave the world, and go to the Father." "Now," said they, "thou speakest no proverb"—that is, enigma. But many a hard and enigmatical saying before He had spoken, and He left them all. A thread runs through all true acts, stringing them together into one harmonious chain; but it is not for the Son of God to be anxious to prove their consistency with each other.

This is self-reliance—to repose calmly on the thought which is deepest in our bosoms, and be unmoved if the world will not accept it yet. To live on your own convictions against the world is to overcome the world; to believe that what is truest in you is true for all; to abide by that, and not be over-anxious to be heard or understood, or sympathized with, certain that at last all must acknowledge the same, and that while you stand firm, the world will come round to you, that is independence. It is not difficult to get away into retirement, and there live upon your own convictions; nor is it difficult to mix with men, and follow their convictions; but to enter into the world, and there live out firmly and fearlessly according to your own conscience, that is Christian greatness.

There is a cowardice in this age which is not Christian. We shrink from the consequences of truth. We look round and cling dependently. We ask what men will think—what others will say—whether they will not stare in astonishment. Perhaps they will; but he who is calculating that, will accomplish nothing in this life. The Father—the Father who is with us and in us—what does He think? God's work can not be done without a spirit of independence. A man is got some way in the Christian life when he has learned to say humbly and yet majestically, "I dare to be alone."

Lastly, remark the humility of this loneliness. Had the Son of man simply said, I can be alone, He would have said no more than any proud, self-relying man can say. But when he added, "because the Father is with me," that independence assumed another character, and self-reliance became only another form of reliance upon God. Distinguish between genuine and spurious humility. There is a false humility which says, "It is my own poor thought, and I must not trust it. I must distrust my own reason and judgment, because they are my own. I must not accept the dictates of my own conscience, for it is not my own, and is not trust in self the great fault of our fallen nature?"

Very well. Now remember something else. There is a Spirit which beareth witness with our spirits; there is a God who "is not far from any one of us;" there is a "Light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world." Do not be unnaturally humble. The thought of your mind, perchance, is the thought of God. To refuse to follow *that* may be to disown God. To take the judgment and conscience of other men to live by, where is the humility of that? From whence did their conscience and judgment come? Was the fountain from which they drew exhausted for you? If they refuse like you to rely on their own conscience, and you rely upon it, how are you sure that it is more the mind of God than your own which you have refused to hear?

Look at it in another way. The charm of the words of great men—those grand sayings which are recognized as true as soon as heard—is this, that you recognize them as wisdom which has passed across your own mind. You feel that they are your own thoughts come back to you, else you would not at once admit them: "All that floated across me before, only I could not say it, and did not feel confident enough to assert it, or had not conviction enough to put it into words." Yes, God spoke to you what He did to them: only they believed it, said it, trusted the Word within them, and you did not. Be sure that often when you say, "It is only my own poor thought, and I am alone," the real correcting thought is this, "Alone, but the Father is with me;" therefore I can live that lonely conviction.

There is no danger in this, whatever timid minds may think—no danger of mistake, if the character be a true one. For we are not left in uncertainty in this matter. It is given us to know our base from our noble hours—to distinguish between the voice which is from above, and that which speaks from below, out of the abyss of our animal and selfish nature. Samuel could distinguish between the impulse, quite a human one, which would have made him select Eliab out of Jesse's sons, and the deeper judgment by which "the Lord said, Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature, for I have refused him." Doubtless deep truth of character is required for this; for the whispering voices get mixed together, and we dare not abide by our own thoughts, because we think them our own, and not God's; and this because we only now and then endeavor to know in earnest. It is only given to the habitually true to know the difference. He knew it, because all His blessed life long He could say, "My judgment is just, *because* I seek not my own will, but the will of Him which sent me."

The practical result and inference of all this is a very simple, but a very deep one—the deepest of existence. Let life be a life of faith. Do not go timorously about, inquiring what others think, what others believe, and what others say. It seems the easiest, it is the most difficult thing in life, to do this—believe in God. God is near you. Throw yourself fearlessly upon Him. Trembling mortal, there is an unknown might within your soul which will wake when you command it. The day may come when all that is human, man and woman, will fall off from you, as they did from Him. Let His strength be yours. Be independent of them all now. The Father is with you. Look to Him, and He will save you.

XVI.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."—John xiii. 34.

These words derive impressiveness from having been spoken immediately before the last Supper, and on the eve of the great Sacrifice: the commandment of love issued appropriately at the time of the Feast of Love, and not long before the great Act of Love. For the love of Christ was no fine *saying:* it cost Him His life to say these words with meaning, "As I have loved you."

There is a difficulty in the attempt to grasp the meaning of this command, arising from the fact that words change their meaning. Our Lord affixed a new significance to the word love: it had been in use, of course, before, but the new sense in which He used it made it a new word.

His law is not adequately represented by the word love. because love is, by conventional usage, appropriated to one species of human affection, which, in the commoner men, is the most selfish of all our feelings; and in the best is too exclusive and individual to represent that charity which is universal.

Nor is charity a perfect symbol of His meaning; for charity, by use, is identified with another form of love which is but a portion of it, almsgiving; and too saturated with that meaning to be entirely disengaged from it, even when we use it most accurately.

Benevolence or philanthropy, in derivation, come nearer to the idea; but yet you feel at once that these words fall short; they are too tame and cold; too merely passive, as states of feeling rather than forms of life.

We have no sufficient word. There is therefore no help for it, but patiently to strive to master the meaning of this mighty word love, in the only light that is left us—the light of the Saviour's life: "As I have loved you:" that alone expounds it. We will dispossess our minds of all preconceived notions; remove all low associations, all partial and conventional ones. If we would understand this law, it must be ever a "new" commandment, ever receiving fresh light and meaning from His life.

Take, I. The novelty of the law—"That ye love one another."

II. The spirit or measure of it—"As I have loved you."

I. Its novelty. A "new commandment," yet that law was old. See 1 John ii. 7, 8. It was new as an historical fact. We talk of the apostolic mission as a matter of course; we say that the apostles were ordered to go and plant churches, and so we dismiss the great fact. But we forget that the command was rather the result of a spirit working from within, than of an injunction working from without. That spirit was love.

And when that new spirit was in the world, see how straightway it created a new thing. Men before that had travelled into foreign countries: the naturalist to collect specimens; the historian to accumulate facts; the philosopher to hive up wisdom, or else he had staid in his cell or grove to paint beautiful *pictures* of love. But the spectacle of an Apostle Paul crossing oceans—not to conquer kingdoms—not to hive up knowledge, but to impart life—not to accumulate stores for self, but to give, and to spend himself—was new in the history of the world. The celestial fire had touched the hearts of men, and their hearts flamed; and it caught, and spread, and would not stop. On they went, that glorious band of brothers, in their strange enterprise, over oceans, and through forests, penetrating into the dungeon, and to the throne—to the hut of the savage feeding on human flesh, and to the shore lined with the skin-clad inhabitants of these far isles of Britain. Read the account given by Tertullian of the marvellous rapidity with which the Christians increased, and you are reminded of one of those vast armies of ants which moves across a country in irresistible myriads, drowned by thousands in rivers, cut off by fire, consumed by man and beast, and yet fresh hordes succeeding interminably to supply their place.

A new voice was heard: a new yearning upon earth; man pining at being severed from his brother, and longing to burst the false distinctions which had kept the best hearts from each other so long—an infant cry of life—the cry of the young Church of God. And all this from Judea—the narrowest, most bigoted, most intolerant nation on the face of the earth.

Now I say that this was historically a new thing.

2. It was new in extent. It was, in literal words, an old commandment given before both to Jew and Gentile. To the Jew, as, for instance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord." To the Gentile, in the recognition which was so often made of the beauty of the law in its partial application, as in the case of friendship, patriotism, domestic attachment, and so on.

But the difference lay in the extent in which these words "one another" were understood. By them, or rather by "neighbor," the Jew meant his countrymen; and narrowed that down again to his friends among his countrymen—so that the well-known Rabbinical gloss upon these words, current in the days of Christ, was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." And what the Gentile understood by the extent of the law of love, we may learn from the well-known words of their best and wisest, who thanked heaven that he was born a man, and not a brute—a Greek, and not a barbarian: as if to be a barbarian were identical with being a brute.

Now listen to Christ's exposition of the word neighbor. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies." And he went farther: as a specimen of a neighbor, he specially selected one of that nation whom, as a theologian and a patriot, every Jew had been taught to hate.

And just as the application of electricity to the innumerable wants of human life and to new ends is reckoned a new discovery and invention of modern times (though the fact has been familiar for ages to the Indian child in the forest of the Far West, and applied by him for ages to his childish sports), so the extension of this grand principle of Love to all the possible cases of life, and to all possible persons — even though the principle was known and applied long before, in love to friends, country, and relations—is truly and properly "a new commandment," a discovery, a gospel, a revelation.

3. It was new in being made the central principle of a system. Never had obedience before been trusted to a principle: it had always been hedged round by a law. The religion of Christ is not a law, but a spirit; not a creed, but a life. To the one motive of love, God has intrusted the whole work of winning the souls of His redeemed. The heart of man was made for love—pants and pines for it: only in the love of Christ, and not in restrictions, can his soul expand. Now it was reserved for One to pierce, with the glance of intuition, down into the springs of human action, and to proclaim the simplicity of its machinery. "Love," said the apostle after Him, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

We are told that in the new commandment the old perishes: that under the law of love, man is free from the law of works. Let us see how.

Take any commandment—for example, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth. I may abstain from murder and theft, deterred by law; because law has annexed to them certain penalties. But I may also rise into the spirit of charity· then I am free from the law; the law was not made for a righteous man: the law no more binds or restrains me, now that I love my neighbor, than the dike built to keep in the sea at high tide restrains it when that sea has sunk to low-water mark.

Or the seventh. You may keep that law from dread of discovery, or you may learn a higher love: and then you *can not* injure a human soul; you can not degrade a human spirit. Charity has made the old commandment superfluous. In the strong language of St. John, you *can not* sin, because you are born of God.

It was the proclamation of this, the great living principle of human obedience, not with the pedantry of a philosopher, nor the exaggeration of an orator, but in the simple reality of life, which made this commandment of Christ a new commandment.

II. The spirit or measure of the law—"*as* I have loved you."

Broadly, the love of Christ was the spirit of giving all He had to give. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Christ's love was not a sentiment; it was a self-giving. To that His adversaries bore testimony: "He saved others; himself He can not save." Often as we have read these words, did it ever strike us, and if not, does it not bring a flash of surprise when we perceive it, that these words, meant as taunt, were really the noblest panegyric, a testimony higher and more adequate far than even that of the centurion? "He saved others; himself He can not save." The first clause contained the answer to the second—"Himself He can not save!" How *could* He, having saved others? How can any keep what he gives? How can any live for self, when He is living for others? Unconsciously, those enemies were enunciating the very principle of Christianity, the grand law of all existence, that only by losing self you can save others; that only by giving life you can bless. Love gives itself. The mother spends herself in giving life to her child; the soldier dies for his country; nay, even the artist produces nothing destined for immortality, nothing that will *live*, except so far as he has forgotten himself, and merged his very being in his work.

"He saved others; himself He can not save." That was the love of Christ. Now to descend to particulars.

That spirit of self-giving manifests itself in the shape of considerate kindliness. Take three cases: First, that in which he fed the people with bread. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat." There was a tenderness which, not absorbed in his own great designs, considered a number of small particulars of their state, imagined, provided, and this for the satisfaction of the lowest wants. Again, to the disciples: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." He would not overwork them in the sublimest service. He did not grudge from duty their interval of relaxation; He even tenderly enforced it. Lastly, His dying words: "Behold thy mother! Woman, behold thy son!" Short sentences. He was too exhausted to say more. But in that hour of death-torture, He could think of her desolate state when he was gone, and with delicate thoughtful attention provide for her well-being.

There are people who would do great acts; but because they wait for great opportunities, life passes, and the acts of love are not done at all. Observe, this considerateness of

Christ was shown in little things. And such are the parts of human life. Opportunities for doing *greatly* seldom occur; life is made up of infinitesimals. If you compute the sum of happiness in any given day, you will find that it was composed of small attentions, kind looks, which made the heart swell, and stirred into health that sour, rancid film of misanthropy which is apt to coagulate on the stream of our inward life, as surely as we live in heart apart from our fellow-creatures.

Doubtless the memory of each one of us will furnish him with the picture of some member of a family whose very presence seemed to shed happiness: a daughter, perhaps, whose light step, even in the distance, irradiated every one's countenance. What was the secret of such a one's power? what had she done? Absolutely nothing; but radiant smiles, beaming good-humor, the tact of divining what every one felt and every one wanted, told that she had got out of self and learned to think for others; so that at one time it showed itself in deprecating the quarrel which lowering brows and raised tones already showed to be impending, by sweet words; at another, by smoothing an invalid's pillow; at another, by soothing a sobbing child; at another, by humoring and softening a father who had returned weary and ill-tempered from the irritating cares of business. None but she saw those things. None but a loving heart *could* see them. That was the secret of her heavenly power.

Call you those things homely trifles, too homely for a sermon? By reference to the character of Christ, they rise into something quite sublime. For *that* is loving as He loved. And remark, too, these trifles prepared for larger deeds. The one who will be found in trial capable of great acts of love, is ever the one who is always doing considerate small ones. The soul which poured itself out to death upon the cross for the human race, was the Spirit of Him who thought of the wants of the people, contrived for the rest of the disciples, and was thoughtful for a mother.

Once again—it was a love never foiled by the unworthiness of those on whom it had been once bestowed. It was a love which faults, desertion, denial, unfaithfulness could not chill, even though they wrung His heart. He had chosen and He trusted. Even in ordinary manhood, that is a finely-tempered heart, one of no ordinary mould, which can say, "It ever was my way, and shall be still, when I do trust a man, to trust him wholly."

And yet there was every thing to shake His trust in humanity. The Pharisees called him Good Master, and were circumventing Him all the while. The people shouted hosannas, and three days afterwards were shrieking for His blood. One disciple who had dipped in the same dish, and been trusted with His inmost counsels, deceived and betrayed Him; another was ashamed of Him; three fell asleep while He was preparing for death; all forsook Him. Yet nothing is more surprising than that unshaken, I had well-nigh said *obstinate*, trust with which He clung to His hopes of our nature, and believed in the face of demonstration.

As we mix in life, there comes, especially to sensitive natures, a temptation to distrust. In young life we throw ourselves with unbounded and glorious confidence on such as we think well of—an error soon corrected: for we soon find out—too soon—that men and women are not what they seem. Then comes disappointment; and the danger is a reaction of desolating and universal mistrust. For if we look on the doings of man with a merely worldly eye, and pierce below the surface of character, we are apt to feel bitter scorn and disgust for our fellow-creatures. We have lived to see human hollowness; the ashes of the Dead Sea shore; the falseness of what seemed so fair; the mouldering beneath the whited sepulchre: and no wonder if we are tempted to think "friendship *all* a cheat—smiles hypocrisy—words deceit;" and they who are what is called *knowing* in life contract by degrees, as the result of their experience, a hollow distrust of men, and learn to sneer at apparently good motives—that demoniacal sneer which we have seen, ay, perhaps felt, curling the lip at times, "Doth Job serve God for naught?"

The only preservation from this withering of the heart is love. Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof not of the worthiness of the object, but of the largeness of the soul which loves. Love descends, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibleness and depth of the spring from which it proceeds. The greater mind cleaves to the smaller with more force than the other to it. A parent loves the child more than the child the parent; and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved His disciples infinitely more than His disciples loved Him, because His heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on—ever hopes and expects better things; and this, a trust springing from itself and out of its own deeps alone.

And more than this. It is this *trusting* love that makes men what they are trusted to be—so realizing itself. Would you make men *trustworthy?* Trust them. Would you make them true? Believe them. This was the real force of that sublime battle-cry which no Englishman hears without emotion. When the crews of the fleet of Britain knew that they were *expected* to do their duty, they *did* their duty. They felt, in that spirit-stirring sentence, that they were trusted; and the simultaneous cheer that rose from every ship was a forerunner of victory—the battle was half-won already. They went to serve a country which expected from them great things, and they *did* great things. Those pregnant words raised an enthusiasm for the chieftain who had thrown himself upon his men in trust, which a double line of hostile ships could not appall, nor decks drenched in blood extinguish.

And it is on this principle that Christ wins the hearts of His redeemed. He trusted the doubting Thomas, and Thomas arose with a faith worthy "of his Lord and his God." He would not suffer even the lie of Peter to shake His conviction that Peter might love him yet, and Peter answered nobly to that sublime forgiveness. His last prayer was in extenuation and hope for the race who had rejected Him, and the kingdoms of the world are become His own. He has loved us, God knows why—I do not—and we, all unworthy though we be, respond faintly to that love, and try to be what He would have us.

Therefore come what may, hold fast to love. Though men should rend your heart, let them not embitter or harden it. We win by tenderness, we conquer by forgiveness. Oh, strive to enter into something of that large celestial charity which is meek, enduring, unretaliating, and which even the overbearing world can not withstand forever. Learn the new commandment of the Son of God. Not to love merely, but to love *as He loved.* Go forth in this spirit to your life-duties: go forth, children of the Cross, to carry every thing before you, and win victories for God by the conquering power of a love like His.

XVII.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH TO MEN OF WEALTH.

"And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?"—1 Sam. xxv. 10, 11.

I HAVE selected this passage for our subject this evening, because it is one of the earliest cases recorded in the Bible in which the interests of the employer and the employed, the man of wealth and the man of work, stood, or seemed to stand, in antagonism to each other.

It was a period in which an old system of things was breaking up, and the new one was not yet established. The patriarchal relationship of tutelage and dependence was gone, and monarchy was not yet in firm existence. Saul was on the throne but his rule was irregular and disputed. Many things were slowly growing up into custom which had not yet the force of law; and the first steps by which custom passes into law from precedent to precedent are often steps at every one of which struggle and resistance must take place.

The history of the chapter is briefly this: Nabal, the wealthy sheep-master, fed his flocks in the pastures of Carmel. David was leader of a band of men who got their living by the sword on the same hills: outlaws, whose excesses he in some degree restrained, and over whom he retained a leader's influence. A rude irregular honor was not unknown among those fierce men. They honorably abstained from injuring Nabal's flocks. They did more: they protected them from all harm against the marauders of the neighborhood. By the confession of Nabal's own herdsmen, "they were a wall unto them both by night and day, all the time they were with them keeping their flocks."

And thus a kind of right grew up: irregular enough, but sufficient to establish a claim on Nabal for remuneration of these services; a new claim, not admitted by him: reckoned by him an exaction, which could be enforced by no law:

only by that law which is above all statute-law, deciding according to emergencies—an indefinable instinctive sense of fairness and justice. But as there was no law, and each man was to himself a law, and the sole arbiter of his own rights, what help was there but that disputes should rise between the wealthy proprietors and their self-constituted champions, with exaction and tyranny on the one side, churlishness and parsimony on the other? Hence a fruitful and ever-fresh source of struggle: the one class struggling to take as much, and the other to give as little as possible. In modern language, the Rights of Labor were in conflict with the Rights of Property.

The story proceeds thus: David presented a demand, moderate and courteous enough (vs. 6, 7, 8). It was refused by Nabal, and added to the refusal were those insulting taunts of low birth and outcast condition which are worse than injury, and sting, making men's blood run fire. One court of appeal was left. There remained nothing but the trial by force. "Gird ye on," said David, "every man his sword."

Now observe the fearful, hopeless character of this struggle. The question had come to this: whether David, with his ferocious and needy six hundred mountaineers, united by the sense of wrong, or Nabal, with his well-fed and trained hirelings, bound by interest and not by love to his cause, were stronger? Which was the more powerful—want whetted by insult, or selfishness pampered by abundance; they who wished to keep by force, or they who wished to take? An awful and uncertain spectacle, but the spectacle which is exhibited in every country where rights are keenly felt, and duties lightly regarded—where insolent demand is met by insulting defiance. Wherever classes are held apart by rivalry and selfishness, instead of drawn together by the law of love—wherever there has not been established a kingdom of heaven, but only a kingdom of the world—there exist the forces of inevitable collision.

I. The causes of this false social state.
II. The message of the Church to the man of wealth.

I. False basis on which social superiority was held to rest.

Throughout Nabal's conduct was built upon the assumption of his own superiority. He was a man of wealth. David was dependent on his own daily efforts. Was not that enough to settle the question of superiority and inferiority? It was enough on both sides for a long time, till the falsehood of the assumption became palpable and intolerable. But palpable and intolerable it did become at last.

A social falsehood will be borne long, even with considerable inconvenience, until it forces itself obtrusively on men's attention, and can be endured no longer. The exact point at which *this* social falsehood, that wealth constitutes superiority, and has a right to the subordination of inferiors, becomes intolerable, varies according to several circumstances.

The evils of poverty are comparative—they depend on climate. In warm climates, where little food, no fuel, and scanty shelter are required, the sting is scarcely felt till poverty becomes starvation. They depend on contrast. Far above the point where poverty becomes actual famine, it may become unbearable if contrasted strongly with the unnecessary luxury and abundance enjoyed by the classes above. Where all suffer equally, as men and officers suffer in an Arctic voyage, men bear hardship with cheerfulness: but where the suffering weighs heavily on some, and the luxury of enjoyment is out of all proportion monopolized by a few, the point of reaction is reached long before penury has become actual want: or again, when wealth or rank assumes an insulting, domineering character—when contemptuous names for the poor are invented, and become current among the more unfeeling of a wealthy class—then the falsehood of superiority can be tolerated no longer: for we do not envy honors which are meekly borne, nor wealth which is unostentatious.

Now it was this which brought matters to a crisis. David had borne poverty long—nay, he and his men had long endured the contrast between their own cavern-homes and beds upon the rock, and Nabal's comforts. But when Nabal added to this those pungent biting sneers which sink into poor men's hearts and rankle—which are not forgotten, but come out fresh in the day of retribution—"Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master," then David began to measure himself with Nabal; not a wiser man—nor a better—nor even a stronger. Who is this Nabal? Intellectually, a fool; morally, a profligate, drowning reason in excess of wine at the annual sheep-shearing; a tyrant over his slaves—overbearing to men who only ask of him their rights. Then rose the question which Nabal had better not have forced men to answer for themselves. By what right does this possessor of wealth lord it over men who are inferior in no one particular?

Now observe two things.

1. An apparent inconsistency in David's conduct. David had received injury after injury from Saul, and had only forgiven. One injury from Nabal, and David is striding over

the hills to revenge his wrong with naked steel. How came this reverence and irreverence to mix together?

We reply. Saul had a claim of authority on David's allegiance; Nabal only one of rank. Between these the Bible makes a vast difference. It says, The *powers* which be are ordained of God. But *upper* and *lower*, as belonging to difference in property, are fictitious terms: true, if character corresponds with titular superiority; false, if it does not. And such was the difference manifested in the life of the Son of God. To lawful authority, whether Roman, Jewish, or even priestly, He paid deference; but to the titled mark of conventional distinction, none. Rabbi, Rabbi, was no Divine authority. It was not power, a delegated attribute of God—it was only a name. In Saul, therefore, David reverenced one his superior in authority; but in Nabal he only had before him one surpassing him in wealth. And David refused, somewhat too rudely, to acknowledge the bad, great man as his superior: would pay him no reverence, respect, or allegiance whatever. Let us mark that distinction well, so often confused—kings, masters, parents: here is a power ordained of God. Honor it. But wealth, name, title, distinctions, always fictitious, often false and vicious, if you can claim homage for these separate from worth, you confound two things essentially different. Try that by the test of His life. Name the text where Christ claimed reverence for wealth or rank. On the Mount did the Son of Man bow the knee to the majesty of wealth and wrong, or was His Sonship shown in this, that He would not bow down to that as if of God?

2. This great falsehood respecting superior and inferior rested on a truth. There had been a superiority in the wealthy class once. In the patriarchal system wealth and rule had gone together. The father of the family and tribe was the one in whom proprietorship was centred; but the patriarchal system had passed away. Men like Nabal succeeded to the patriarch's wealth, and expected the subordination which had been yielded to patriarchal character and position; and this when every particular of relationship was altered. Once the patriarch was the protector of his dependents. Now David's class was independent, and the protectors, rather than the protected: at all events, able to defend themselves. Once the rich man was ruler in virtue of paternal relationship. Now wealth was severed from rule and relationship: a man might be rich, yet neither a ruler, nor a protector, nor a kinsman. And the fallacy of Nabal's expectation consisted in this, that he demanded for wealth that

reverence which had once been due to men who happened to be wealthy.

It is a fallacy in which we are perpetually entangled. We expect reverence for that which was once a symbol of what was reverenced, but is reverenced no longer. Here in England it is common to complain that there is no longer any respect of inferiors towards superiors—that servants were once devoted and grateful, tenants submissive, subjects enthusiastically loyal. But we forget that servants were once protected by their masters, and tenants safe from wrong only through the guardianship of their powerful lords; that thence a personal gratitude grew up; that now they are protected by the law from wrong by a different social system altogether; and that the individual bond of gratitude subsists no longer. We expect that to masters and employers the same reverence and devotedness shall be rendered which were due to them under other circumstances, and for different reasons; as if wealth and rank had ever been the claim to reverence, and not merely the accidents and accompaniments of the claim—as if any thing less sacred than holy ties could purchase sacred feelings—as if the homage of free manhood could be due to gold and name—as if to the mere Nabal-fool who is labelled as worth so much; and whose signature carries with it so much coin, the holiest and most ennobling sensations of the soul, reverence and loyalty, were due by God's appointment.

No. That patriarchal system has passed forever. No sentimental wailings for the past, no fond regrets for the virtues of a by-gone age, no melancholy, poetical, retrospective antiquarianism can restore it. In Church and State the past *is* past: and you can no more bring back the blind reverence, than the rude virtues of those days. The day has come in which, if feudal loyalty or patriarchal reverence are to be commanded, they must be won by patriarchal virtues or feudal real superiorities.

II. Cause of this unhealthy social state: A false conception respecting rights.

It would be unjust to Nabal to represent this as an act of willful oppression and conscious injustice. He did what appeared to him fair between man and man. He paid his laborers. Why should he pay any thing beyond stipulated wages?

David's demand appeared an extravagant and insolent one, provoking unfeigned astonishment and indignation. It was an invasion of his rights. It was a dictation with respect to the employment of that which was his own. "Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

Recollect, too, there was something to be said for Nabal. This view of the irresponsible right of property was not *his* invention. It was the view probably entertained by all his class. It had descended to him from his parents. They were prescriptive and admitted rights on which he stood. And however false or unjust a prescriptive right may be, however baseless when examined, there is much excuse for those who have inherited and not invented it; for it is hard to see through the falsehood of any system by which we profit, and which is upheld by general consent, especially when good men too uphold it. Rare indeed is that pureheartedness which sees with eagle glance through conventionalisms. This is a wrong, and I and my own class are the doers of it.

On the other hand, David and his needy followers were not slow to perceive that they had their rights over that property of Nabal's.

Men on whom wrongs press are the first to feel them, and their cries of pain and indignation are the appointed means of God to direct to their wrongs the attention of society. Very often the fierce and maddened shriek of suffering is the first intimation that a wrong exists at all.

There was no law in Israel to establish David's claims. This guardianship of Nabal's flocks was partly a self-constituted thing. No bargain had been made, no sum of reward expressly stipulated. But there is a law besides and above all written law, which gives to written laws their authority, and from which so often as they diverge, it is woe to the framers of the law: for their law must perish, and the Eternal Law unseen will get itself acknowledged as a truth from heaven or a truth from hell—a truth begirt with fire and sword, if they will not read it except so.

In point of fact, David had a right to a share of Nabal's profits. The harvest was in part David's harvest, for without David it never could have been reaped. The sheep were in part David's sheep, for without David not a sheep would have been spared by the marauders of the hills. Not a sheaf of corn was carried to Nabal's barn, nor a night passed in repose by Nabal's shepherds, but what told of the share of David in the saving of that sheaf, and the procurement of that repose (not the less real because it was past and unseen). The right which the soldier has by law to his pay was the right which David had by unwritten law—a right resting on the fact that his services were indispensable for the harvest.

Here, then, is one of the earliest instances of the Rights of Labor coming into collision with the Rights of Property: rights shadowy, undefined, perpetually shifting their boundaries, varying with every case, altering with every age, incapable of being adjusted except rudely by law, and leaving always something which the most subtle and elaborate law can not define, and which in any moment may grow up into a wrong.

Now when it comes to this, Rights against Rights, there is no determination of the question but by overwhelming numbers or blood. David's remedy was a short, sharp, decisive one. "Gird ye on every man his sword." And it is difficult, for the sake of humanity, to say to which side in such a quarrel we should wish well. If the rich man succeed in civil war, he will bind the chain of degradation more severely and more surely for years, or ages, on the crushed serf. If the champions of popular rights succeed by the sword, you may then await in awe the reign of tyranny, licentiousness, and lawlessness. For the victory of the lawless, with the memory of past wrongs to avenge, is almost more sanguinary than the victory of those who have had power long, and whose power had been defied.

We find another cause in circumstances. Want and unjust exclusion precipitated David and his men into this rebellion. It is common enough to lay too much weight on circumstances. Nothing can be more false than the popular theory that ameliorated outward condition is the panacea for the evils of society. The Gospel principle begins from within, and works outward.

The world's principle begins with the outward condition, and expects to influence inwardly. To expect that by changing the world without, in order to suit the world within, by taking away all difficulties and removing all temptations, instead of hardening the man within against the force of outward temptation—to adapt the lot to the man, instead of moulding the spirit to the lot, is to reverse the Gospel method of procedure. Nevertheless, even that favorite speculation of theorists, that perfect circumstances will produce perfect character, contains a truth. Circumstances of outward condition are not the sole efficients in the production of character, but they are efficients which must not be ignored. Favorable condition will not produce excellence, but the want of it often hinders excellence. It is true that vice leads to poverty: all the moralizers tell us that, but it is also true that poverty leads to vice.

There are some in this world to whom, speaking humanly, social injustice and social inequalities have made goodness impossible. Take, for instance, the case of these bandits on Mount Carmel. Some of them were outlawed by their own crimes, but others doubtless by debts not willfully contracted —one at least, David, by a most unjust and unrighteous persecution. And these men, excluded, needy, exasperated by a sense of wrong, untaught outcasts, could you gravely expect from them obedience, patience, meekness, religious resignation? Yes, my brethren, that is exactly the marvellous impossibility people do most inconsistently expect; and there are no bounds to their astonishment if they do not get what they expect: Superhuman honesty from starving men, to whom life by hopelessness has become a gambler's desperate chance! chivalrous loyalty and high forbearance from creatures to whom the order of society has presented itself only as an unjust system of partiality! We forget that forbearance and obedience are the very last and highest lessons learned by the spirit in its most careful training. By those unhallowed conventionalisms through which we, like heathens, and not like Christians, crush the small offender and court the great one—that damnable cowardice by which we banish the seduced and half admire the seducer—by which, in defiance of all manliness and all generosity, we punish the weak and tempted, and let the tempter go free:—by all these we make men and women outcasts, and then expect from them the sublimest graces of reverence and resignation!

II. The message of the Church to the man of wealth.

The message of the Church contains those principles of life which, carried out, would, and hereafter will, realize the Divine Order of Society. The revealed Message does not create the facts of our humanity—it simply makes them known. The Gospel did not make God our Father, it authoritatively reveals that He is so. It did not create a new duty of loving one another, it revealed the old duty which existed from eternity, and must exist as long as humanity is humanity. It was no "new commandment," but an old commandment which had been heard from the beginning.

The Church of God is that living body of men who are called by Him out of the world, not to be the inventors of a new social system, but to exhibit in the world by word and life, chiefly by life, what Humanity is, was, and will be, in the idea of God. Now so far as the social economy is con cerned, the revelations of the Church will coincide with the discoveries of a Scientific Political Economy. Political Economy discovers slowly the facts of the immutable laws of social well-being. But the living principles of those laws, which cause them to be obeyed, Christianity has revealed to loving hearts long before. The Spirit discovers them to the spirit. For instance, Political Economy, gazing on such a fact, as this of civil war, would arrive at the same principles which the Church arrives at. She too would say, Not selfishness, but love. Only that she arrives at these principles by experience, not intuition—by terrible lessons, not revelation—by revolutions, wars, and famines, not by spiritual impulses of charity.

And so because these principles were eternally true in humanity, we find in the conduct of Abigail towards David in this early age, not explicitly, but implicity, the very principles which the Church of Christ has given to the world; and more—the very principles which a sound political economy would sanction. In her reply to David we have the anticipation by a loving heart of those duties which selfish prudence must have taught at last.

1. The spiritual dignity of man as man. Recollect David was the poor man, but Abigail, the high-born lady, admits his worth: "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days." Here is a truth revealed to that age. Nabal's day, and the day of such as Nabal, is past; another power is rising above the horizon. David's cause is God's cause. Worth does not mean what a man is worth—you must find some better definition than that.

Now this is the very truth revealed in the Incarnation. David, Israel's model king, the king by the grace of God, not by the conventional rules of human choice—is a shepherd's son. Christ, the King who is to reign over our regenerated humanity, is humbly born—the poor woman's Son. That is the Church's message to the man of wealth, and a message which it seems has to be learned afresh in every age. It was new to Nabal. It was new to the men of the age of Christ. In His day they were offended in Him, because He was humbly born. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" It is the offense now. They who retain those superstitious ideas of the eternal superiority of rank and wealth have the first principles of the Gospel yet to learn. How can they believe in the Son of Mary? They may honor Him with the lip, they deny him in His brethren. Whoever helps to keep alive that ancient lie of upper and lower, resting the distinction not on official authority or personal worth, but on wealth and title, is doing his part to hinder the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Now the Church of Christ proclaims that truth in baptism. She speaks of a kingdom here in which all are, as spirits, equal. She reveals a fact. She does not affect to create the fact. She says—not hypothetically, "This child *may* be the child of God if prevenient grace has taken place, or if hereafter he shall have certain feelings and experiences;" nor, "Hereby I create this child magically by supernatural power in one moment what it was not a moment before:" but she says, authoritatively, "I pronounce this child the child of God: the brother of Christ the First-born—the Son of Him who has taught us by His Son to call Him *our* Father, not *my* Father. Whatever that child may become hereafter in fact, he is now, by right of creation and redemption, the child of God. Rich or poor, titled or untitled, he shares the spiritual nature of the second Adam—the Lord from heaven."

2. The second truth expressed by Abigail was the law of Sacrifice. She did not heal the grievance with smooth words. Starving men are not to be pacified by professions of goodwill. She brought her two hundred loaves, and her two skins of wine, her five sheep ready dressed, etc. A princely provision!

You might have said this was waste — half would have been enough. But the truth is, liberality is a most real economy. She could not stand there calculating the smallest possible expense at which the affront might be wiped out. True economy is to pay liberally and fairly for faithful service. The largest charity is the best economy. Nabal had had a faithful servant. He should have counted no expense too great to retain his services, instead of cheapening and depreciating them. But we wrong Abigail if we call this economy or calculation. In fact, had it been done on economical principles, it would have failed. Ten times this sum from Nabal would not have arrested revenge. For Nabal it was too late. Concessions extracted by fear only provoke exaction further. The poor know well what is given because it must be given, and what is conceded from a sense of justice. They *feel* only what is real. David's men and David felt that these were not the gifts of a sordid calculation, but the offerings of a generous heart. And it won them—their gratitude—their enthusiasm—their unfeigned homage.

This is the attractive power of that great law, whose highest expression was the Cross. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Say what you will, it is not interest, but the sight of noble qualities and true sacrifice, which commands the devotion of the world. Yea, even the bandit and the outcast will bend before that as before a Divine thing. In one form or another, it draws all men, it commands all men.

Now this the Church proclaims as part of its special message to the rich. It says that the Divine Death was a Sacrifice. It declares that death to be the law of every life which is to be like His. It says that the law, which alone can interpret the mystery of life, is the self-sacrifice of Christ. It proclaims the law of His life to have been this: "For their sakes I devote (sanctify) Myself, that they also may be devoted through the truth."

In other words, the self-sacrifice of the Redeemer was to be the living principle and law of the self-devotion of His people. It asserts that to be the principle which alone can make any human life a true life. "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church." We have petrified *that* sacrifice into a dead theological dogma, about the exact efficacy of which we dispute metaphysically, and charge each other with heresy. That Atonement will become a living fact only when we humbly recognize in it the eternal fact that sacrifice is the law of life. The very mockers at the crucifixion unwittingly declared the principle: "He saved others: himself He can not save." Of course—how could He save himself who had to save others? You can only save others when you have ceased to think of saving your own soul; you can only truly bless when you have done with the pursuit of personal happiness. Did you ever hear of a soldier who saved his country by making it his chief work to secure himself? And was the Captain of our salvation to become the Saviour by contravening that universal law of sacrifice, or by obeying it?

Brother men, the early Church gave expression to that principle of sacrifice in a very touching way. They had all things in common. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." They failed, not because they declared that, but because men began to think that the duty of sharing was compulsory. They proclaimed principles which were unnatural, inasmuch as they set aside all personal feelings, which are part of our nature too. They virtually compelled private property to cease, because he who retained private property when all were giving up was degraded, and hence became a hypocrite and liar, like Ananias.

But let us not lose the truth which they expressed in an exaggerated way: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." Property is sacred. It is *private* property; if it were not, it could not be sacrificed. If it were to be shared equally by the idle and the industrious, there could be no love in giving. Property is the rich man's own. Nabal is right in saying, My bread—my water—my flesh. But there is a higher right which says, It is not yours. And that voice speaks to every rich man in one way or another, according as he is selfish or unselfish: coming as a voice of terror or a voice of blessing. It came to Nabal with a double curse, turning his heart into stone with the vision of the danger and the armed ranks of David's avengers, and laying on David's soul the sin of intended murder. It came to the heart of Abigail with a double blessing: blessing her who gave and him who took.

To the spirit of the Cross alone we look as the remedy for social evils. When the people of this great country, especially the rich, shall have been touched with the spirit of the Cross to a largeness of sacrifice of which they have not dreamed as yet, there will be an atonement between the Rights of Labor and the Rights of Property.

3. The last part of the Church's message to the man of wealth touches the matter of rightful influence.

Very remarkable is the demeanor of David towards Nabal, as contrasted with his demeanor towards Abigail. In the one case, defiance, and a haughty self-assertion of equality; in the other, deference, respect, and the most eloquent benediction. It was not therefore against the wealthy class, but against individuals of the class, that the wrath of these men burned.

See, then, the folly and the falsehood of the sentimental regret that there is no longer any reverence felt towards superiors. There *is* reverence to superiors, if only it can be shown that they are superiors. Reverence is deeply rooted in the heart of humanity—you can not tear it out. Civilization—science—progress—only change its direction: they do not weaken its force. If it no longer bows before crucifixes and candles, priests and relics, it is not extinguished towards what is truly sacred and what is priestly in man. The fiercest revolt against false authority is only a step towards submission to rightful authority. Emancipation from false lords only sets the heart free to honor true ones. The freeborn David will not do homage to Nabal. Well, now go and mourn over the degenerate age which no longer feels respect for that which is above it. But behold—David has found a something nobler than himself. Feminine charity—sacrifice and justice—and in gratitude and profoundest respect he bows to that. The state of society which is coming is not one of protection and dependence, nor one of mysterious authority, and blind obedience to it, nor one in which any class shall be privileged by Divine right, and another remain in perpetual tutelage; but it is one in which unselfish services and personal qualities will command, by Divine right, gratitude and admiration, and secure a true and spiritual leadership.

Oh, let not the rich misread the signs of the times, or mistake their brethren: they have less and less respect for titles and riches, for vestments and ecclesiastical pretensions, but they have a real respect for superior knowledge and superior goodness: they listen like children to those whom they believe to know a subject better than themselves. Let those who know it say whether there is not something inexpressibly touching and even humbling in the large, hearty, manly, English reverence and love which the working-men show towards those who love and serve them truly, and save them from themselves and from doing wrong. See how David's feelings gush forth: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

The rich and the great may have that love if they will.

To conclude. Doubtless David was wrong: he had no right even to redress wrongs thus; patience was his divinely appointed duty; and doubtless in such circumstances we should be very ready to preach submission and to blame David. Alas! we, the clergy of the Church of England, have been only too ready to do this: for three long centuries we have taught submission to the powers that be, as if that were the only text in Scripture bearing on the relations between the ruler and the ruled. Rarely have we dared to demand of the powers that be, justice; of the wealthy man and the titled, duties. We have produced folios of slavish flattery upon the Divine Right of Power. Shame on us! we have not denounced the wrongs done to weakness: and yet for one text in the Bible which requires submission and patience from the poor, you will find a hundred which denounce the vices of the rich—in the writings of the noble old Jewish prophets, *that*, and almost that only—*that*, in the Old Testament, with a deep roll of words that sound like Sinai thunders: and *that* in the New Testament in words less impassioned and more calmly terrible from the apostles and their Master: and woe to us in the great day of God, if we have been the sycophants of the rich instead of the redressers of the poor man's wrongs—woe to us if we have been tutoring David into respect to his superior, Nabal, and forgotten that David's cause, not Nabal's, is the cause of God.

XVIII.

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT RESPECTING INHERITANCE.*

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."—Luke xii. 13–15.

The Son of God was misunderstood and misinterpreted in His day. With this fact we are familiar; but we are not at all familiar with the consideration that it was very natural that He should be so mistaken.

He went about Galilee and Judea proclaiming the downfall of every injustice, the exposure and confutation of every lie. He denounced the lawyers who refused education to the people, in order that they might retain the key of knowledge in their own hands. He reiterated Woe! woe! woe! to the Scribes and Pharisees, who revered the past, while systematically persecuting every new prophet and every brave man who rose up to vindicate the spirit of the past against the *institutions* of the past. He spoke parables which bore hard on the men of wealth: that, for instance, of the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, who died, and in hell lift up his eyes, being in torments—that of the wealthy proprietor who prospered in the world; who pulled down his barns to build greater; who all the while was in the sight of God a fool; who in front of judgment and eternity was found unready. He stripped the so-called religious party of that day of their respectability, convicted them, to their own astonishment, of hypocrisy, and called them "whited sepulchres."

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* This Sermon was preached the Sunday after that on which "The Message of the Church to Men of Wealth" was preached, and it was intended as a further illustration of that subject.

He said God was against them; that Jerusalem's day was come, and that she must fall.

And now consider candidly:—suppose that all this had taken place in this country; that an unknown stranger, with no ordination, with no visible authority, basing his authority upon his truth, and his agreement with the mind of God the Father, had appeared in this England, uttering halt the severe things He spoke against the selfishness of wealth, against ecclesiastical authorities, against the clergy, against the popular religious party—suppose that such an one should say that our whole social life is corrupt and false—suppose that instead of "thou blind Pharisee," the word had been "thou blind Churchman!"

Should *we* have fallen at the feet of such an one and said, Lo! this is a message from Almighty God, and He who brings it is a Son of God; perhaps what He says Himself, His only Son—God—of God? Or should we not have rather said, This is dangerous teaching, and revolutionary in its tendencies, and He who teaches it is an incendiary—a mad, democratical, dangerous fanatic?

That was exactly what they did say of your Redeemer in His day; nor does it seem at all wonderful that they did.

The sober, respectable inhabitants of Jerusalem, very comfortable themselves, and utterly unable to conceive why things should not go on as they had been going on for a hundred years—not smarting from the misery and the moral degradation of the lazars with whom He associated, and under whose burdens his loving spirit groaned—thought it excessively dangerous to risk the subversion of their quiet enjoyment by such outcries. They said, prudent men! "If He is permitted to go on this way, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." The priests and Pharisees, against whôm He had specially spoken, were fiercer still. They felt there was no time to be lost.

But still more, His own friends and followers misunderstood Him.

They heard him speak of a kingdom of justice and righteousness in which every man should receive the due reward of his deeds. They heard Him say that this kingdom was not far off, but actually among them, hindered only by their sins and dullness from immediate appearance. Men's souls were stirred and agitated. They were ripe for any thing, and any spark would have produced explosion. They thought the next call would be to take the matter into their own hands.

Accordingly, on one occasion, St. John and St. James asked permission to call down fire from heaven upon a village of the Samaritans which would not receive their message. On another occasion, on a single figurative mention of a sword, they began to gird themselves for the struggle: "Lord," said one, "behold here are two swords." Again, as soon as He entered Jerusalem for the last time, the populace heralded His way with shouts, thinking that the long-delayed hour of retribution was come at last. They saw the Conqueror before them who was to vindicate their wrongs. In imagination they already felt their feet upon the necks of their enemies.

And because their hopes were disappointed, and He was not the demagogue they wanted, therefore they turned against Him. Not the Pharisees only, but the people whom He had come to save—the outcast, and the publican, and the slave, and the maid-servant; they whose cause He had so often pleaded, and whose emancipation He had prepared. It was the *people* who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

This will become intelligible to us if we can get at the spirit of this passage.

Among those who heard Him lay down the laws of the kingdom of God—justice, fairness, charity—there was one who had been defrauded, as it seems, by his brother of his just share of the patrimony. He thought that the One who stood before him was exactly what he wanted: a redresser of wrongs—a champion of the oppressed—a divider and arbiter between factions—a referee of lawsuits—one who would spend His life in the unerring decision of all misunderstandings.

To his astonishment, the Son of Man refused to interfere in his quarrel, or take part in it at all. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider between you?"

We ask attention to two things.

I. The Saviour's refusal to interfere.

II. The source to which He traced the appeal for interference.

I. The Saviour's refusal to interfere.

1. He implied that it was not His *part* to interfere. "Who made me a judge or a divider?"

It is a common saying that religion has nothing to do with politics, and particularly there is a strong feeling current against all interference with politics by the ministers of religion. This notion rests on a basis which is partly wrong, partly right.

To say that religion has nothing to do with politics is to assert that which is simply false. It were as wise to say that the atmosphere has nothing to do with the principles of architecture. Directly, nothing—indirectly, much. Some kinds of stone are so friable, that though they will last for centuries in a dry climate, they will crumble away in a few years in a damp one. There are some temperatures in which a form of building is indispensable which in another would be unbearable. The shape of doors, windows, apartments, all depend upon the air that is to be admitted or excluded. Nay, it is for the very sake of procuring a habitable atmosphere within certain limits that architecture exists at all. The atmospheric laws are distinct from the laws of architecture; but there is not an architectural question into which atmospheric considerations do not enter as conditions of the question.

That which the air is to architecture, religion is to politics. It is the vital air of every question. Directly, it determines nothing—indirectly, it conditions every problem that can arise. The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. How, if His Spirit is not to mingle with political and social truths?

Nevertheless, in the popular idea that religion as such must not be mixed with politics, there is a profound truth. Here, for instance, the Saviour will not meddle with the question. He stands aloof, sublime and dignified. It was no part of His to take from the oppressor and give to the oppressed, much less to encourage the oppressed to take from the oppressor himself. It was His part to forbid oppression. It was a judge's part to decide what oppression was. It was not His office to determine the boundaries of civil right, nor to lay down the rules of the descent of property. Of course there was a spiritual and moral principle involved in this question. But He would not suffer His sublime mission to degenerate into the mere task of deciding casuistry.

He asserted principles of love, unselfishness, order, which would decide all questions; but the questions themselves He would not decide. He would lay down the great political principle, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's;" but He would not determine whether this particular tax was due to Cæsar or not.

So, too, He would say, justice, like mercy and truth, is one of the weightier matters of the law; but he would not decide whether in this definite case this or that brother had justice on his side. It was for themselves to determine that, and in that determination lay their responsibility.

And thus religion deals with men, not cases: with human hearts, not casuistry.

Christianity determines general principles, out of which, no doubt, the best government would surely spring: but what the best government is it does not determine—whether monarchy or a republic, an aristocracy or a democracy.

It lays down a great social law: "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." But it is not its part to declare how much is just and equal. It has no fixed scale of wages according to which masters must give. *That* it leaves to each master and each age of society.

It binds up men in a holy brotherhood. But what are the best institutions and surest means for arriving at this brotherhood it has not said. In particular, it has not pronounced whether competition or co-operation will secure it.

And hence it comes to pass that Christianity is the eternal religion, which can never become obsolete. If it sets itself to determine the temporary and the local, the justice of this tax, or the exact wrongs of that conventional maxim, it would soon become obsolete: it would be the religion of one century, not of all. As it is, it commits itself to nothing except eternal *principles.*

It is not sent into this world to establish monarchy, or secure the franchise—to establish socialism, or to frown it into annihilation—but to establish a charity, and a moderation, and a sense of duty, and a love of right, which will modify human life according to any circumstances that can possibly arise.

2. In this refusal, again, it was implied that His kingdom was one founded on spiritual disposition, not one of outward law and jurisprudence.

That this lawsuit should have been decided by the brothers themselves, in love, with mutual fairness, would have been much—that it should be determined by authoritative arbitration, was, spiritually speaking, nothing. The right disposition of their hearts, and the right division of their property thence resulting, was Christ's kingdom. The apportionment of their property by another's division had nothing to do with His kingdom.

Suppose that both were wrong: one oppressive, the other covetous. Then, that the oppressor should become generous, and the covetous liberal, were a great gain. But to take from one selfish brother in order to give to another selfish brother, what spiritual gain would there have been in this?

Suppose, again, that the retainer of the inheritance was in the wrong, and that the petitioner had justice on his side—that he was a humble, meek man, and his petition only one of right. Well, to take the property from the unjust and give it to Christ's servant, might be, and was, the duty of a judge; but it was not Christ's part, nor any gain to the cause of Christ. He does not reward His servants with inheritances, with lands, houses, gold. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Christ triumphs by wrongs meekly borne, even more than by wrongs legally righted. What we call poetical justice is not His kingdom.

To apply this to the question of the day. The great problem which lies before Europe for solution is, or will be, this: Whether the present possessors of the soil have an exclusive right to do what they will with their own, or whether a larger claim may be put in by the workman for a share of the profits? Whether Capital has hitherto given to Labor its just part, or not? Labor is at present making an appeal, like that of this petitioner, to the Church, to the Bible, to God. "Master, speak unto my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."

Now in the *mere* setting of that question to rest, Christianity is not interested. That landlords should become more liberal, and employers more merciful: that tenants should be more honorable, and workmen more unselfish; that would be indeed a glorious thing—a triumph of Christ's cause; and any arrangement of the inheritance *thence* resulting would be a real coming of the kingdom of God. But whether the soil of the country and its capital shall remain the property of the rich, or become more available for the poor, the rich and the poor remaining as selfish as before—whether the selfish rich shall be able to keep, or the selfish poor to take, is a matter, religiously speaking, of profound indifference. Which of the brothers shall have the inheritance, the monopolist or the covetous? Either—neither—who cares? Fifty years hence what will it matter? But a hundred thousand years hence it *will* matter whether they settled the question by mutual generosity and forbearance.

3. I remark a third thing. He refused to be the friend of one, because He was the friend of both. He never was the champion of a class, because He was the champion of humanity. We may take for granted that the petitioner was an injured man—one, at all events, who thought himself injured; and Christ had often taught the spirit which would have made his brother right him, but He refused to take his

part against his brother, just because he *was* his brother— Christ's servant, and one of God's family, as well as he.

And this was His spirit always. The Pharisees thought to commit Him to a side when they asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not. But He would take no side as the Christ: neither the part of the Government against the tax-payers, nor the part of the tax-payers against the Government.

Now it is a common thing to hear of the rights of man—a glorious and a true saying, but, as commonly used, the expression only means the rights of a section or class of men. And it is very worthy of remark, that in these social quarrels both sides appeal to Christ and to the Bible as the champions of their rights, precisely in the same way in which this man appealed to Him. One class appeal to the Bible, as if it were the great Arbiter which decrees that the poor shall be humble and the subject submissive; and the other class appeal to the same book triumphantly, as if it were exclusively on their side, its peculiar blessedness consisting in this, that it commands the rich to divide the inheritance, and the ruler to impose nothing that is unjust.

In either of these cases Christianity is degraded, and the Bible misused. They are not, as they have been made, oh, shame! for centuries, the servile defenders of rank and wealth, nor are they the pliant advocates of discontent and rebellion. The Bible takes neither the part of the poor against the rich exclusively, nor that of the rich against the poor; and this because it proclaims a real, deep, true, and not a revolutionary brotherhood.

The brotherhood of which we hear so much is often only a one-sided brotherhood. It demands that the rich shall treat the poor as brothers. It has a right to do so. It is a brave and a just demand; but it forgets that the obligation is mutual; that in spite of his many faults, the rich man is the poor man's brother, and that the poor man is bound to recognize him and feel for him as a brother.

It requires that every candid allowance shall be made for the vices of the poorer classes, in virtue of the circumstances which, so to speak, seem to make such vices inevitable: for their harlotry, their drunkenness, their uncleanness, their insubordination. Let it enforce that demand; it may and must do it in the name of Christ. He was mercifully and mournfully gentle to those who through terrible temptation and social injustice had sunk, and sunk into misery at least as much as into sin. But then, let it not be forgotten that some sympathy must be also due on the same score of circumstances to the rich man. Wealth has its temptations, so has power. The vices of the rich are his forgetfulness of responsibility, his indolence, his extravagance, his ignorance of wretchedness. These must be looked upon, not certainly with weak excuses, but with a brother's eye by the poor man, if he will assert a brotherhood. It is not just to attribute all to circumstances in the one case, and nothing in the other. It is not brotherhood to say that the laborer does wrong because he is tempted, and the man of wealth because he is intrinsically bad.

II. The source to which he traced this appeal for a division.

Now it is almost certain that the reflection which aros to the lips of Christ is not the one which would have presented itself to us under similar circumstances. We should probably have sneered at the state of the law in which a lawsuit could obtain no prompt decision, and injury get no redress: or we should have remarked upon the evils of the system of primogeniture, and asked whether it were just that one brother should have all, and the others none: or we might, perhaps, have denounced the injustice of permitting privileged classes at all.

He did nothing of this kind. He did not sneer at the law, nor inveigh against the system, nor denounce the privileged classes. He went deeper: to the very root of the matter. "Take heed and beware of covetousness." It was covetousness which caused the unjust brother to withhold: it was covetousness which made the defrauded brother indignantly complain to a stranger. It is covetousness which is at the bottom of all lawsuits, all social grievances, all political factions. So St. James traces the genealogy. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts which reign in your flesh?"

Covetousness—the covetousness of all: of the oppressed as well as of the oppressor; for the cry "Divide" has its root in covetousness just as truly as "I will not." There are no innocent classes: no devils who oppress, and angels who are oppressed. The guilt of a false social state must be equally divided.

We will consider somewhat more deeply this covetousness. In the original the word is a very expressive one. It means the desire of having more — not of having more because there is not enough, but simply a craving after more. More when a man has not enough. More when he has. More, more, ever more. Give, give. Divide, divide.

This craving is not universal. Individuals and whole nations are without it. There are some nations, the condition of whose further civilization is, that the desire of accumulation be increased. They are too indolent or too unambitious to be covetous. Energy is awakened when wants are immediate, pressing, present; but ceases with the gratification.

There are other nations in which the craving is excessive, even to disease. Pre-eminent among these is England. This desire of accumulation is the source of all our greatness, and all our baseness. It is at once our glory and our shame. It is the cause of our commerce, of our navy, of our military triumphs, of our enormous wealth, and our marvellous inventions. And it is the cause of our factions and animosities, of our squalid pauperism, and the worse than heathen degradation of the masses of our population.

That which makes this the more marvellous is, that of all the nations on the earth, none are so incapable of enjoyment as we. God has not given to us that delicate development which He has given to other races. Our sense of harmony is dull and rare, our perception of beauty is not keen. An English holiday is rude and boisterous: if protracted, it ends in ennui and self-dissatisfaction. We can not enjoy. Work, the law of human nature, is the very need of an English nature. That cold shade of Puritanism which passed over us, sullenly eclipsing all grace and enjoyment, was but the shadow of our own melancholy, unenjoying, national character.

And yet we go on accumulating as if we could enjoy more by having more. To quit the class in which they are and rise into that above, is the yearly, daily, hourly effort of millions in this land. And this were well if this word "above" implied a reality: if it meant higher intellectually, morally, or even physically. But the truth is, it is only higher fictitiously. The middle classes already have every real enjoyment which the wealthiest can have. The only thing they have not is the ostentation of the means of enjoyment. More would enable them to multiply equipages, houses, books. It could not enable them to enjoy them more.

Thus, then, we have reached the root of the matter. Our national craving is, in the proper meaning of the term, covetousness. Not the desire of enjoying more, but the desire of having more. And if there be a country, a society, a people to whom this warning is specially applicable, that country is England, that society our own, that people are we. "Take heed and beware of covetousness."

The true remedy for this covetousness He then proceeds to give. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Now observe the distinction between His view and the world's view of humanity. To the question, What is a man worth? the world replies by enumerating what he has. In reply to the same question, the Son of Man replies by estimating what he is. Not what he has, but what he is, *that*, through time and through eternity, is his real and proper life. He declared the presence of the soul: He announced the dignity of the spiritual man; He revealed the being that we are. Not that which is supported by meat and drink, but that whose very life is in truth, integrity, honor, purity. "Skin for skin" was the satanic version of this matter; "All that a man hath will he give for his *life*." "What shall it profit a man," was the Saviour's announcement, "if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own *soul?*"

For the oppressed and the defrauded this was the true consolation and compensation—the true consolation. This man had lost so much loss. Well, how is he consoled? By the thought of retaliation—by the promise of revenge—by the assurance that he shall have what he ought by right to have? Nay, but thus—*as it were:* Thou hast lost so much, but thyself remains. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Most assuredly Christianity proclaims laws which will eventually give to each man his rights. I do not deny this. But I say that the hope of these rights is not the message, nor the promise, nor the consolation of Christianity. Rather they consist in the assertion of the true life, instead of all other hopes: of the substitution of blessedness which is inward character, for happiness which is outward satisfaction of desire; for the broken-hearted, the peace which the world can not give; for the poor, the life which destitution can not take away; for the persecuted, the thought that they are the children of their Father which is in heaven.

A very striking instance of this is found in the consolation offered by St. Paul to slaves. How did he reconcile them to their lot? By promising that Christianity would produce the abolition of the slave-trade? No; though this *was* to be effected by Christianity: but by assuring them that, though slaves, they might be inly free—Christ's freedmen. "Art thou called, being a slave? Care not for it."

This, too, was the real compensation offered by Christianity for injuries.

The other brother had the inheritance; and to win the inheritance he had laid upon his soul the guilt of injustice His advantage was the property: the price he paid for that advantage was a hard heart. The injured brother had *no inheritance*, but instead he had, or might have had, innocence, and the conscious joy of knowing that he was not the injurer. Herein lay the balance.

Now there is great inconsistency between the complaints and claims that are commonly made on these subjects. There are outcries against the insolence of power and the hard-hearted selfishness of wealth. Only too often these cries have a foundation of justice. But be it remembered that these are precisely the cost at which the advantages, such as they are, are purchased. The price which the man in authority has paid for power is the temptation to be insolent. He has yielded to the temptation, and bought his advantage dear. The price which the rich man pays for his wealth is the temptation to be selfish. They have paid in spirituals for what they have gained in temporals.

Now, if you are crying for a share in that wealth, and a participation in that power, you must be content to run the risk of becoming as hard and selfish and overbearing as the man whom you denounce. Blame their sins if you will, or despise their advantages; but do not think that you can covet their advantages, and keep clear of their temptations. God is on the side of the poor, and the persecuted, and the mourners—a light in darkness, and a life in death; but the poverty, and the persecution, and the darkness are the condition on which they feel God's presence. They must not expect to have the enjoyment of wealth and the spiritual blessings annexed to poverty at the same time.

If you will be rich, you must be content to pay the price of falling into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition; and if that price be too high to pay, then you must be content with the quiet valleys of existence, where alone it is well with us: kept out of the inheritance, but having instead God for your portion—your all-sufficient and everlasting portion—peace, and quietness, and rest with Christ.

XIX.

FREEDOM BY THE TRUTH.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John viii. 32.

If these words were the only record we possessed of the Saviour's teaching, it may be that they would be insufficient to prove His personal Deity, but they would be enough to demonstrate the Divine character of His mission.

Observe the greatness of the aim, and the wisdom of the means.

The aim was to make all men free. He saw around Him servitude in every form—man in slavery to man, and race to race: His own countrymen in bondage to the Romans—slaves both of Jewish and Roman masters, frightfully oppressed: men trembling before priestcraft: and those who were politically and ecclesiastically free, in worse bondage still—the rich and rulers slaves to their own passions

Conscious of His inward Deity and of His Father's intentions, He, without hurry, without the excitement which would mark the mere earthly liberator, calmly said, "Ye shall be free."

See, next, the peculiar wisdom of the means.

The craving for liberty was not new—it lies deep in human nature. Nor was the promise of satisfying it new. Empirics, charlatans, demagogues, and men who were not charlatans nor demagogues, had promised in vain.

1. First, they had tried by force. Wherever force has been used on the side of freedom, we honor it; the names which we pronounce in boyhood with enthusiasm are those of the liberators of nations and the vindicators of liberty. Israel had had such: Joshua—the Judges—Judas Maccabæus. Had the Son of God willed so to come, even on human data the success was certain. I waive the truth of His inward Deity, of His miraculous power, of His power to summon to His will more than twelve legions of angels. I only notice now that men's hearts were full of Him: ripe for revolt: and that at a single word of His, thrice three hundred thousand swords would have started from their scabbards. But had He so come, one nation might have gained liberty—

not the race of man: moreover, the liberty would only have been independence of a foreign conqueror. Therefore as a conquering king He did not come.

2. Again, it might have been attempted by legislative enactment. Perhaps only once has this been done successfully, and by a single effort. When the names of conquerors shall have been forgotten, and modern civilization shall have become obsolete—when England's shall be ancient history, one act of hers will be remembered as a record of her greatness, that Act by which in costly sacrifice she emancipated her slaves.

But one thing England could not do. She could give freedom—she could not fit for freedom—she could not make it lasting. The stroke of a monarch's pen will do the one, the discipline of ages is needed for the other. Give to-morrow a constitution to some feeble Eastern nation, or a horde of savages, and in half a century they will be subjected again. Therefore the Son of Man did not come to free the world by legislation.

3. It might be done by civilization. Civilization does free—intellect equalizes. Every step of civilization is a victory over some lower instinct. But civilization contains within itself the elements of a fresh servitude. Man conquers the powers of nature, and becomes in turn their slave. The workman is in bondage to the machinery which does his will: his hours, his wages, his personal habits determined by it. The rich man fills his house with luxuries, and can not do without them. A highly civilized community is a very spectacle of servitude. Man is there a slave to dress, to hours, to manners, to conventions, to etiquette. Things contrived to make his life more easy become his masters.

Therefore Jesus did not talk of the progress of the species nor the growth of civilization, He did not trust the world's hope of liberty to a right division of property. But he freed the inner man, that so the outer might become free too. "Ye shall know the truth, and the *truth* shall make you free."

I. The truth that liberates.
II. The liberty which truth gives.

The truth which Christ taught was chiefly on these three points: God—man—immortality.

First, God. Blot out the thought of God, a living person, and life becomes mean, existence unmeaning, the universe dark, and resolve is left without a stay, aspiration and duty without a support.

The Son exhibited God as love: and so that fearful bondage of the mind to the necessity of fate was broken. A living Lord had made the world, and its dark and unintelligible mystery meant good, not evil. He manifested Him as a Spirit; and if so, the only worship that could please Him must be a spirit's worship. Not by sacrifices is God pleased, nor by droned litanies and liturgies, nor by fawning and flattery, nor is his wrath bought off by blood. Thus was the chain of superstition rent asunder; for superstition is wrong views of God, exaggerated or inadequate, and wrong conceptions of the way to please Him.

And so when the woman of Samaria brought the conversation to that old ecclesiastical question about consecrated buildings, whether on Mount Gerizim or on Mount Moriah God was the more acceptably adored, He cut the whole conversation short by the enunciation of a single truth: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

2. Truth respecting man.

We are a mystery to ourselves. Go to any place where nations have brought together their wealth and their inventions, and before the victories of mind you stand in reverence. Then stop to look at the passing crowds who have attained that civilization. Think of their low aims, their mean lives, their conformation only a little higher than that of brute creatures, and a painful sense of degradation steals upon you. So great, and yet so mean! And so of individuals. There is not one here whose feelings have not been deeper than we can fathom, nor one who would venture to tell out to his brother man the mean, base thoughts that have crossed his heart during the last hour. Now this riddle He solved—He looked on man as fallen, but magnificent in his ruin. We, catching that thought from Him, speak as He spoke. But none that were born of woman ever felt this or lived this like Him. Beneath the vilest outside He saw this: a human soul, capable of endless growth; and thence He treated with what for want of a better term we may call respect, all who approached Him; not because they were titled Rabbis or rich Pharisees, but because they were men.

Here was a germ for freedom. It is not the shackle on the wrist that constitutes the slave, but the *loss* of self-respect—to be treated as degraded till he feels degraded—to be subjected to the lash till he believes that he deserves the lash: and liberty is to suspect and yet reverence self—to suspect the tendency which leaves us ever on the brink of fall—to reverence that within us which is allied to God, re deemed by God the Son, and made a temple of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps we have seen an insect or reptile imprisoned in wood or stone. How it got there is unknown—how the particles of wood in years, or of stone in ages, grew round it, is a mystery, but not a greater mystery than the question of how man became incarcerated in evil. At last the day of emancipation came. The axe-stroke was given: and the light came in, and the warmth; and the gauze wings expanded, and the eye looked bright; and the living thing stepped forth, and you saw that there was not its home. Its home was the free air of heaven.

Christ taught that truth of the human soul. It is not in its right place. It never is in its right place in the dark prison-house of sin. Its home is freedom and the breath of God's life.

3. Truth respecting immortality.

He taught that this life is not all: that it is only a miserable state of human infancy. He taught that in words: by His life, and by His resurrection.

This, again, was freedom. If there be a faith that cramps and enslaves the soul, it is the idea that this life is all. If there be one that expands and elevates, it is the thought of immortality: and this, observe, is something quite distinct from the selfish desire of happiness. It is not to enjoy, but to *be*, that we long for. To enter into more and higher life: a craving which we can only part with when we sink below humanity, and forfeit it.

This was the martyrs' strength. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might attain a better resurrection. In that hope, and the knowledge of that truth, they were free from the fear of pain and death.

II. The nature of the liberty which truth gives.

1. Political freedom.

It was our work last Sunday to show that Christianity does not directly interfere with political questions. But we should have only half done our work if we had not also learned that, mediately and indirectly, it must influence them. Christ's Gospel did not promise political freedom, yet it gave it: more surely than conqueror, reformer, or patriot, that Gospel will bring about a true liberty at last.

And this, not by theories nor by schemes of constitutions, but by the revelation of truths. God a Spirit: man His child, redeemed and sanctified. Before that spiritual equality, all distinctions between peer and peasant, monarch and laborer, privileged and unprivileged, vanish. A better man, or a wiser man than I, is in my presence, and I feel it a mockery to be reminded that I am his superior in rank.

Let us hold that truth; let us never weary of proclaiming it; and the truth shall make us free at last.

2. Mental independence.

Slavery is that which cramps powers. The worst slavery is that which cramps the noblest powers. Worse, therefore, than he who manacles the hands and feet, is he who puts fetters on the mind, and pretends to demand that men shall think, and believe, and feel thus and thus, because others so believed, and thought, and felt before.

In Judea life was become a set of forms, and religion a congeries of traditions. One living word from the lips of Christ, and the mind of the world was free.

Later, a mountain mass of superstition had gathered round the Church, atom by atom, and grain by grain. Men said that the soul was saved only by doing and believing what the priesthood taught. Then the heroes of the Reformation spoke. They said the soul of man is saved by the grace of God: a much more credible hypothesis. Once more the mind of the world was made free, and made free by truth.

There is a tendency in the masses always to think—not what is true, but—what is respectable, correct, orthodox: we ask, is that authorized? It comes partly from cowardice, partly from indolence, from habit, from imitation, from the uncertainty and darkness of all moral truths, and the dread of timid minds to plunge into the investigation of them. Now, truth known and believed respecting God and man frees from this, by warning of individual responsibility. But responsibility is personal. It can not be delegated to another, and thrown off upon a church. Before God, face to face, each soul must stand to give account.

Do not, however, confound mental independence with mental pride. It may, it ought to coexist with the deepest humility. For that mind alone is free which, conscious ever of its own feebleness, feeling hourly its own liability to err, turning thankfully to light from whatever side it may come, does yet refuse to give up that right with which God has invested it of judging, or to abrogate its own responsibility, and so humbly, and even awfully, resolves to have an opinion, a judgment, a decision of its own.

3. Superiority to temptation.

It is not enough to define the liberty which Christ promises as freedom from sin. Many circumstances will exempt from sin which do not yet confer that liberty "where the Spirit of the Lord is." Childhood, paralysis, ill health, the impotence of old age may remove the capacity and even the desire of transgression; but the child, the paralytic, the old man, are not free through the truth.

Therefore, to this definition we must add, that one whom Christ liberates is free by his own will. It is not that he would and can not; but that he can, and will not. Christian liberty is right will, sustained by love, and made firm by faith in Christ.

This may be seen by considering the opposite of liberty—moral bondage. Go to the intemperate man in the morning, when his head aches, his hand trembles, his throat burns, and his whole frame is relaxed and unstrung: he is ashamed, he hates his sin, and would not do it. Go to him at night, when the power of habit is on him like a spell, and he obeys the mastery of his craving. He can use the language of Romans vii.: "That which he would, he does not; but the evil that he hates, that does he." Observe, he is not in possession of a true self. It is not he, but sin which dwelleth in him, that does it. A power which is not himself, which is not he, commands him against himself. And that is slavery.

This is a gross case, but in every more refined instance the slavery is just as real. Wherever a man would and can not, there is servitude. He may be unable to control his expenditure, to rouse his indolence, to check his imagination. Well, he is not free. He may boast, as the Jews did, that he is Abraham's son, or any other great man's son—that he belongs to a free country—that he never was in bondage to any man, but free in the freedom of the Son he is not.

4. Superiority to fear.

Fear enslaves, courage liberates—and that always. Whatever a man intensely dreads, that brings him into bondage, if it be above the fear of God and the reverence of duty. The apprehension of pain, the fear of death, the dread of the world's laugh, of poverty, or the loss of reputation, enslave alike.

From such fear Christ frees, and through the power of the truths I have spoken of. He who lives in the habitual contemplation of immortality can not be in bondage to time, or enslaved by transitory temptations. I do not say he *will* not; "he *can not* sin," saith the Scripture, while that faith is living. He who feels his soul's dignity, knowing what he is and who, redeemed by God the Son, and freed by God the Spirit, can not cringe, nor pollute himself, nor be mean. He who aspires to gaze undazzled on the intolerable brightness of that One before whom Israel veiled their faces, will scarcely quail before any earthly fear.

This is not picture-painting. This is not declamation. These are things that have been. There have been men on this earth of God's, of whom it was simply true that it was easier to turn the sun from its course than them from the paths of honor. There have been men like John the Baptist, who could speak the truth which had made their own spirits free, with the axe above their neck. There have been men, redeemed in their inmost being by Christ, on whom tyrants and mobs have done their worst, and when, like Stephen, the stones crashed in upon their brain, or when their flesh hissed and crackled in the flames, were calmly superior to it all. The power of evil had laid its shackles on the flesh, but the mind, and the soul, and the heart were free.

We conclude with two inferences:

1. To cultivate the love of truth. I do not mean veracity: that is another thing. Veracity is the correspondence between a proposition and a man's belief. Truth is the correspondence of the proposition with fact. The love of truth is the love of realities—the determination to rest upon facts, and not upon semblances. Take an illustration of the way in which the habit of cultivating truth is got. Two boys see a misshapen, hideous object in the dark. One goes up to the cause of his terror, examines it, learns what it is; he knows the truth, and the truth has made him free. The other leaves it in mystery and unexplained vagueness, and is a slave for life to superstitious and indefinite terrors. Romance, prettiness, "dim religious light," awe and mystery—these are not the atmosphere of Christ's gospel of liberty. Base the heart on facts. The truth alone can make you free.

2. See what a Christian is. Our society is divided into two classes—those who are daring, inquisitive, but restrained by no reverence, and kept back by little religion; those who may be called religious: but, with all their excellences, we can not help feeling that the elements of their character are feminine rather than masculine, and that they have no grasp or manly breadth, that their hold is on feeling rather than on truth.

Now see what a Christian is, drawn by the hand of Christ. He is a man on whose clear and open brow God has set the stamp of truth: one whose very eye beams bright with honor; in whose very look and bearing you may see freedom, manliness, veracity; a brave man—a noble man—frank, generous, true, with, it may be, many faults; whose freedom may take the form of impetuosity or rashness, but the form of meanness never. Young men, if you have been deterred from religion by its apparent feebleness and narrowness, remember, it is a manly thing to be a Christian.

XX.

THE KINGDOM OF THE TRUTH.

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John xviii. 37.

The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, and the whole fabric of the Christian religion rests on the monarchy of Christ. The Hebrew prisoner who stood before the Roman judge claimed to be the King of men, and eighteen centuries have only verified His claim. There is not a man bearing the Christian name who does not, in one form or another, acknowledge Him to be the Sovereign of his soul. The question therefore at once suggests itself—On what title does this claim rest?

Besides the title on which the Messiah grounded His pretensions to be the Ruler of a kingdom, three are conceivable: the title of force, the title of prescriptive authority, or the title of incontrovertible reasoning.

Had the Messiah founded His kingdom upon the basis of force, he would simply have been a rival of the Cæsars. The imperial power of Rome rested on that principle. This was all that Pilate meant at first by the question, "Art thou a king?" As a Roman, he had no other conception of rule. Right well had Rome fulfilled her mission as the iron kingdom which was to command by strength, and give to the world the principles of law. But that kingdom was wasting when these words were spoken. For seven hundred years had the empire been building itself up. It gave way at last, and was crumbled into fragments by its own ponderous massiveness. To use the language of the prophet Daniel, miry clay had mixed with the kingdom of iron, and the softer nations which had been absorbed into it broke down its once invincible strength by corrupting and enervating its citizens; the conquerors of the world dropped the sword from a grasp grown nerveless. The empire of strength was passing away; for no kingdom founded on force is destined to permanence. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Before Pontius Pilate Christ distinctly disclaimed this right of force as the foundation of his sovereignty. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

The next conceivable basis of a universal kingdom is prescriptive authority. The scribes and priests who waited outside for their victim conceived of such a kingdom. They *had* indeed already an ecclesiastical kingdom which dated back far beyond the origin of Rome. They claimed to rule on a title such as this: "It is written." But neither on this title did the Saviour found His claim. He spoke lightly of institutions which were venerable from age. He contravened opinions which were gray with the hoar of ages. It may be that at times He defended Himself on the authority of Moses, by showing that what He taught was not in opposition to Moses; but it is observable that He never rested His claims as a teacher, or as the Messiah, on that foundation. The scribes fell back on this: "It has been said;" or, "It is written." Christ taught, as the men of His day remarked, on an authority very different from that of the scribes. Not even on His own authority: He did not claim that His words should be recognized because He said them, but because they were true. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Prescription—personal authority—these were not the basis of His kingdom.

One more possible title remains. He might have claimed to rule over men on the ground of incontrovertible demonstration of His principles. This was the ground taken by every philosopher who was the founder of a sect. Apparently, after the failure of his first guess, Pilate thought in the second surmise that this was what Jesus meant by calling Himself a king. When he heard of a kingdom, he thought he had before him a rival of Cæsar; but when truth was named, he seems to have fancied that he was called to try a rival of the philosophers—some new candidate for a system—some new pretender of a truth which was to dethrone its rival system.

This seems to be implied in the bitter question, "What is truth?" For the history of opinion in those days was like the history of opinion in our own—religions against religions, philosophies against philosophies—religion and philosophy opposed to one another—the opinion of to-day dethroned by the opinion of to-morrow—the heterodoxy of this age reckoned the orthodoxy of the succeeding one. And Pilate, feeling the vainness and the presumption of these pretensions, having lived to see failure after failure of systems which pretended to teach that which is, smiled bitterly at the enthusiast who again asserted confidently His claims to have discovered the undiscoverable. There broke from his lips a bitter, half-sarcastic, half-sad exclamation of hopeless skepticism, "What is truth?"

And indeed had the Redeemer claimed this—to overthrow the doctrine of the Porch and of the Academy, and to enthrone Christianity as a philosophy of life upon their ruins, by mere argument, that skeptical cry would have been not ill-timed.

In these three ways have men attempted the propagation of the Gospel. By force, when the Church ruled by persecution—by prescriptive authority, when she claimed infallibility, or any modification of infallibility in the Popery of Rome or the Popery of the pulpit—by reasoning, in the age of "evidences," when she only asked to have her proofs brought forward and calmly heard, pledged herself to rule the world by the conviction of the understanding, and laid deep and broad the foundations of rationalism. Let us hear the claim of the King Himself. He rested His royal rights on His testimony to the truth. "Thou sayest, for I am a King (a more correct translation); to this end was I born, to bear witness to the truth." The mode in which the subjects of the kingdom were brought beneath His sway was by assimilation. "Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice." These, then, are our points:

I. The basis of the kingly rule of Christ.
II. The qualifications of the subjects of the kingdom.

I. The basis of the kingly rule of Christ.

Christ is a king in virtue of His being a witness to the truth. "Thou sayest right, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Truth is used here in a sense equivalent to reality: for "truth" substitute reality, and it will become more intelligible. For "the truth" is an ambiguous expression, limited in its application, meaning often nothing more than a theological creed, or a few dogmas of a creed which this or that party have agreed to call "the truth." It would indeed fritter down the majesty of the Redeemer's life to say that He was a witness for the truth of any number of theological dogmas. Himself—His life—were a witness to truth in the sense of reality. The realities of life—the realities of the universe—to these His every act and word bore testimony. He was as much a witness to the truth of the purity of domestic life as to the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation: to the truth of goodness being identical with greatness as much as to the doctrine of the Trinity—and more: His mind corresponded with reality as the dial with the sun.

Again, in being a witness to reality, we are to understand something very much deeper than the statement that He spoke truly. There is a wide difference between truthfulness and mere veracity. Veracity implies a correspondence between words and thoughts: truthfulness, a correspondence between thoughts and realities. To be veracious, it is only necessary that a man give utterance to his convictions; to be true, it is needful that his convictions have affinity with fact.

Let us take some illustrations of this distinction. The prophet tells of men who put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet: who call good evil, and evil good. Yet these were veracious men; for to them evil *was* good, and bitter *was* sweet. There was a correspondence between their opinions and their words: this was veracity. But there was no correspondence between their opinions and eternal fact: this was untruthfulness. They spoke their opinions truly, but their opinions were not true. The Pharisees in the time of Christ were men of veracity. What they thought they said. They thought that Christ was an impostor. They believed that to tithe mint, anise, and cummin was as acceptable to God as to be just, and merciful, and true. It was their conviction that they were immeasurably better than publicans and profligates: yet veracious as they were, the title perpetually affixed to them is, "Ye hypocrites." The life they led being a false life, is called, in the phraseology of the Apostle John, a lie.

If a man speak a careless slander against another, believing it, he has not sinned against veracity; but the carelessness which has led him into so grave an error effectually bars his claim to clear truthfulness. He is a veracious witness, but not a true one. Or a man may have taken up second-hand, indolently, religious views: may believe them, defend them vehemently, is he a man of truth? Has he bowed before the majesty of truth with that patient, reverential humbleness which is the mark of those who love her?

Imagination has pictured to itself a domain in which every one who enters should be compelled to speak only what he thought, and pleased itself by calling such domain the palace of truth. A palace of veracity, if you will, but no temple of the truth: a place where every one would be at liberty to utter his own crude unrealities—to bring forth his delusions, mistakes, half-formed hasty judgments: where the de praved ear would reckon discord harmony, and the depraved eye mistake color—the depraved moral taste take Herod or Tiberius for a king, and shout beneath the Redeemer's Cross, "Himself He can not save." A temple of the truth? Nay, only a palace echoing with veracious falsehoods: a Babel of confused sounds, in which egotism would rival egotism, and truth would be each man's own lie. Far, far more is implied here than that the Son of Man spoke veraciously, in saying that He was a witness to the truth.

Again, when it is said that He was a witness to the truth, it is implied that His very being, here, *manifested* to the world Divine realities. Human nature is but meant to be a witness to the Divine; the true humanity is a manifestation or reflection of God. And that is Divine humanity in which the humanity is a perfect representation of the Divine. "We behold," says the Apostle Paul, in Christ, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." And, to borrow and carry on the metaphor, the difference between Christ and other men is this; they are imperfect reflections, He a perfect one, of God.

There are mirrors which are concave, which magnify the thing that they reflect: there are mirrors convex, which diminish it. And we in like manner represent the Divine in a false, distorted way. Fragments of truth torn out of connection, snatches of harmony joined without unity. We exaggerate and diminish till all becomes untrue. We bring forth our own fancies, our own idiosyncrasies, our own imaginations, and the image of God can be no longer recognized.

In One alone has the Divine been so blended with the human, that, as the ocean mirrors every star and every tint of blue upon the sky, so was the earthly life of Christ the life of God on earth.

Now, observe, that the perfection of humanity consists in faithful imitation of, or witness borne to, the mind and life of God. Whoever has studied and understood the life of Christ will have remarked, not without surprise, that the whole principle of His existence was the habit of unceasing imitation. Listen to a few instances of this.

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, but that which He seeth the Father do." "The words which I speak I speak not of myself, but the Father which is with me, He doeth the works." Do we remember the strange and startling principle on which He defends His infraction of the literal, legal Sabbath? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God the Father works all the sabbath-day. So may man, His son. Do we recollect the ground on which He enforces forgiveness of injuries? A strange ground, surely, which would never have occurred except to One whose life was habitual imitation. "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of (that is, resemble) your Father; . . . for He sendeth His rain upon the just and upon the unjust."

This, then, is man's—this was the Son of Man's relation to the truth. Man is but a learner—a devout recipient of a revelation—here to listen with open ear devoutly for that which he shall hear; to gaze and watch for that which He shall see. Man can do no more. He can not create truth, he can only bear witness to it; he has no proud right of private judgment, he can only listen and report that which is in the universe. If he does not repeat and witness to that, he speaketh of his own, and forthwith ceaseth to be true. He is a liar, and the *father* of it, because he creates it. Each man in his vocation is in the world to do this: as truly as it was said by Christ may it be said by each of us, even by those from whose trades and professions it seems most alien, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

The architect is here to be a witness. He succeeds only so far as he is a witness, and a true one. The lines and curves, the acanthus on his column, the proportions, all are successful and beautiful only so far as they are true—the report of an eye which has lain open to God's world. If he build his light-house to resist the storm, the law of imitation bids him build it after the shape of the spreading oak which has defied the tempest. If man construct the ship which is to cleave the waters, calculation or imitation builds it on the model upon which the Eternal Wisdom has already constructed the fish's form.

The artist is a witness to the truth, or he will never attain the beautiful. So is the agriculturist, or he will never reap a harvest. So is the statesman, building up a nation's polity on the principles which time has proved true, or else all his work crumbles down in revolution: for national revolution is only the Divine rejection stamped on the social falsehood—which can not stand. In every department of life, man must work truly—as a witness. He is born for that, nothing else: and nothing else can he do. Man the Son can do nothing of Himself, but that which He seeth God the Father do.

This was the Saviour's title to be a king, and His kingdom formed itself upon this law: "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice:" that eternal law which makes truth assimilate all that is congenial to itself. Truth is like life: whatever lives absorbs into itself all that is congenial. The leaf that trembles in the wind assimilates the light of heaven to make its color, and the sap of the parent stem, innumerable influences from heaven, and earth, and air, to make up its beautiful being.

So grew the Church of Christ — round Him, as a centre, attracted by the truth: all that had in it harmony with His Divine life and words grew to Him (by gradual accretions): clung to Him as the iron to the magnet. All that were of His Spirit believed: all that had in them the Spirit of Sacrifice were attracted to His Cross. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

He taught not by elaborate trains of argument, like a scribe or a philosopher: He uttered His truths rather as detached intuitions, recognized by intuition, to be judged only by being felt. For instance, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you." Prove that—by force—by authority—by argument—you can not. It suffices that a man reply, "It is not so to me: it is more blessed to receive than it is to give." You have no reply: if he be not of the truth, you can not make him hear Christ's voice. The truth of Christ is true to the unselfish; a falsehood to the selfish. They that are of the truth, like Him, hear His voice: and if you ask the Christian's proof of the truth of such things, he has no other than this: It is true to me, as any other intuitive truth is true; equals are equal, because my mind is so constituted that they seem so perforce. Purity is good, because my heart is so made that it feels it to be good.

Brother men, the truer you are, the humbler, the nobler, the more will you feel Christ to be your king. You may be very little able to prove the king's Divine genealogy, or to appreciate those claims to your allegiance which arise out of His eternal generation: but He will be your Sovereign and your Lord by that affinity of character which compels you to acknowledge His words and life to be Divine. "He that receiveth His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

II. We pass to the consideration of the qualification of the subjects of the empire of the truth. Who are they that are of the truth.

1. The first qualification is to *be* true: "He that *is* of the

truth heareth My voice." Truth lies in character. Christ did not simply *speak* truth: He *was* truth: true through and through; for truth is a thing, not of words, but of life and being. None but a Spirit can be true.

For example. The friends of Job spoke *words* of truth. Scarcely a maxim which they uttered could be impugned: cold, hard, theological verities: but verities out of place, in that place cruel and untrue. Job spoke many words not strictly accurate—hasty, impetuous, blundering, wrong; but the whirlwind came, and, before the voice of God, the veracious falsehoods were swept into endless nothingness: the *true* man, wrong, perplexed in verbal error, stood firm: he was true though his sentences were not: turned to the truth as the sunflower to the sun: as the darkened plant imprisoned in the vault turns towards the light, struggling to solve the fearful enigma of his existence. Job was a servant of the truth, being true in character.

2. The next qualification is integrity. But by integrity I do not mean simply sincerity or honesty; integrity rather according to the meaning of the word as its derivation interprets it — entireness — wholeness — soundness: that which Christ means when He says, "If thine eye be single [or sound], thy whole body shall be full of light."

This integrity extends through the entireness or wholeness of the character. It is found in small matters as well as great; for the allegiance of the soul to truth is tested by small things rather than by those which are more important. There is many a man who would lose his life rather than perjure himself in a court of justice, whose life is yet a tissue of small insincerities. We think that we hate falsehood when we are only hating the consequences of falsehood. We resent hypocrisy and treachery and calumny, not because they are untrue, but because they harm us. We hate the false calumny, but we are half pleased with the false praise. It is evidently not the element of untruth here that is displeasing, but the element of harmfulness. Now he is a man of integrity who hates untruth *as* untruth: who resents the smooth and polished falsehood of society which does no harm: who turns in indignation from the glittering whitened lie of sepulchral Pharisaism which injures no one. Integrity recoils from deceptions which men would almost smile to hear called deception. To a moral, pure mind, the artifices in every department of life are painful: the stained wood which passes for a more firm and costly material in a building, and deceives the eye by seeming what it is not, marble: the painting which is intended to be taken for a re ality: the gilding which is meant to pass for gold: and the glass which is worn to look like jewels; for there is a moral feeling and a truthfulness in architecture, in painting, and in dress, as well as in the market-place, and in the senate, and in the judgment-hall.

"These are trifles." Yes, these are trifles—but it is just these trifles which go to the formation of character. He that is habituated to deceptions and artificialities in trifles, will try in vain to be true in matters of importance: for truth is a thing of habit rather than of will. You can not in any given case, by any sudden and single effort, will to be true, if the habit of your life has been insincerity. And it is a fearful question and a difficult one, how all these things, the atmosphere which we breathe of our daily life, may sap the very foundations of the power of becoming a servant of the truth. Life becomes fictitious: and it passes into religion, till our very religion bases itself upon a figment too. We are not righteous, but we expect God to make believe that we are righteous, in virtue of some peculiar doctrines which we hold; and so our very righteousness becomes the fictitious righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, instead of the righteousness which is by faith, the righteousness of those who are the children of the kingdom of the truth.

3. Once more. He alone is qualified to be the subject of the King who *does* the truth. Christianity joins two things inseparably together: acting truly, and perceiving truly. Every day the eternal nature of that principle becomes more certain. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

It is a perilous thing to separate feeling from acting; to have learnt to feel rightly without acting rightly. It is a danger to which in a refined and polished age, we are peculiarly exposed. The romance, the poem, and the sermon, teach us how to feel. Our feelings are delicately correct. But the danger is this: feeling is given to lead to action; if feeling be suffered to awake without passing into duty, the character becomes untrue. When the emergency for real action comes, the feeling is as usual produced: but accustomed as it is to rise in fictitious circumstances without action, neither will it lead on to action in the real ones. "We pity wretchedness and shun the wretched." We utter sentiments, just, honorable, refined, lofty — but somehow, when a truth presents itself in the shape of a duty, we are unable to perform it. And so such characters become by degrees like the artificial pleasure-grounds of bad taste, in which the waterfall does not fall, and the grotto offers only the refreshment of an imaginary shade, and the green hill does not strike the skies, and the tree does not grow. Their lives are a sugared crust of sweetness trembling over black depths of hollowness: more truly still, "whited sepulchres" —fair without to look upon, "within full of all uncleanness."

It is perilous, again, to separate thinking rightly from acting rightly. He is already half false who speculates on truth and does not do it. Truth is given, not to be contemplated, but to be done. Life is an action—not a thought. And the penalty paid by him who speculates on truth, is that by degrees the very truth he holds becomes to him a falsehood.

There is no truthfulness, therefore, except in the witness borne to God by doing His will—to live the truths we hold, or else they will be no truths at all. It was thus that He witnessed to the truth. He lived it. He spoke no touching truths for sentiment to dwell on, or thought to speculate upon. Truth with Him was a matter of life and death. He periled His life upon the words He said. If He were true, the life of men was a painted life, and the woes He denounced unflinchingly would fall upon the Pharisees. But if *they* were true, or even strong, His portion in this life was the Cross.

Who is a true man? He who does the truth; and never holds a principle on which he is not prepared in any hour to act, and in any hour to risk the consequences of holding it.

I make in conclusion one remark. The kingly character of truth is exhibited strikingly in the calmness of the bearing of the Son of Man before His judge. Veracity is not necessarily dignified. There is a vulgar effrontery—a spirit of defiance which taunts, and braves, and challenges condemnation. It marks the man who is conscious of sincerity, but of nothing higher—whose confidence is in himself and his own honesty, and who is absorbed in the feeling, "I speak the truth and am a martyr." Again, the man of mere veracity is often violent, for what he says rests upon his own assertion: and vehemence of assertion is the only addition he can make to it. Such was the violence of Paul before Ananias. He was indignant at the injustice of being smitten contrary to the law; and the powerlessness of his position, the hopelessness of redress, joined to a conviction of the truth of what he said, produced that vehemence.

It has been often remarked that there is a great difference between theological and scientific controversy. Theologians are proverbially vituperative: because it is a question of veracity: the truth of their views, their moral perceptions, their intellectual acumen. There exists no test but argument on which they can fall back. If argument fails, all fails.

But the man of science stands calmly on the facts of the universe. He is based upon reality. All the opposition and controversy in the world can not alter facts, nor prevent the facts being manifest at last. He can be calm, because he is a witness for the Truth.

In the same way, but in a sense far deeper and more sacred, the Son of Man stood *calm*, rooted in the Truth. There was none of the egotism of self-conscious veracity in those placid, confident, dignified replies. This was not the feeling —"I hold the truth,"—but "I am witness to the truth." They might spit upon Him—kill Him—crucify Him—give His ashes to the winds—they could not alter the Truth by which He stood. Was not that His own feeling? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

There was the kingly dignity of One who, in life and death, stood firm on truth as on a rock.

In the name of Christ, I respectfully commend these thoughts for the special consideration of the present week, to those who will be pledged by oath to witness to the whole truth they know, and nothing but the truth: to those who—permitted by the merciful spirit of English jurisprudence, to watch that their client, if condemned, shall be condemned only according to the law—are yet not justified by the spirit of the life of Christ in falsifying or obscuring facts; and who, owing a high duty to a client, owe one higher to the Truth: and lastly, to those whom the severe intellectual, and, much more, moral training of the English bar has qualified for the high office of disentangling truth from the mazes of conflicting testimony.

From the trial-hour of Christ—from the Cross of the Son of God—there arises the principle to which all His life bore witness, that the first lesson of Christian life is this, Be true —and the second this, Be true—and the third this, Be true.

XXI.

THE SKEPTICISM OF PILATE.

"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"—John xviii. 38.

The lesson which we are to draw from this verse must depend upon the view we take of the spirit in which the words were spoken. Some of the best commentators conceive them to have been words of mockery: and such is the great Lord Bacon's view. "'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for a reply."

In all deference to such authority, we can not believe that this sentence was spoken in jest. In Pilate's whole conduct there is no trace of such a tone. It betrays throughout much of uncertainty, nothing of lightness. He was cruelly tormented with the perplexity of efforts to save his prisoner. He risked his own reputation. He pronounced Him, almost with vehemence, to be innocent. He even felt awe, and was afraid of Him. In such a frame of mind, mockery was impossible.

Let us try to comprehend the character of the man who asked this question. His character will help us to judge the tone in which he asked. And his character, the character of his mind and life, are clear enough from the few things recorded of him. He first hears what the people have to say; then asks the opinion of the priests—then comes back to Jesus—goes again to the priests and people—lends his ear—listens to the ferocity on the one hand, and feels the beauty on the other, balancing between them; and then he becomes bewildered, as a man of the world is apt to do who has had no groundwork of religious education, and hears superficial discussions on religious matters, and superficial charges, and superficial slanders, till he knows not what to think. What *could* come out of such procedure? Nothing but that cheerlessness of soul to which certainty respecting any thing and every thing here on earth seems unattainable. This is the exact mental state which we call skepticism.

Out of that mood, when he heard the enthusiast before him speak of a kingdom of the truth, there broke a sad, bitter, sarcastic sigh, "What is truth?" Who knows any thing about it? Another discoverer of the undiscoverable! *Jesting* Pilate! with Pilate the matter was beyond a jest. It was not a question put for the sake of information: for he went immediately out, and did not stay for information. It was not put for the sake of ridicule, for he went out to say, "I find no fault in Him." Sarcasm there was perhaps: but it was that mournful, bitter sarcasm which hides inward unrest in sneering words: that sad irony whose very laugh rings of inward wretchedness. We shall pursue, from this question of Pilate, two lines of thought.

I. The causes of Pilate's skepticism.
II. The way appointed for discovering what is truth.

I. The causes—and among these I name first, indecision of character. Pilate's whole behavior was a melancholy exhibition. He was a thing set up for the world's pity. See how he acts: he first throws the blame on the priests—and then acknowledges that all responsibility is his own: washes his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it." And then—"Knowest thou not that *I* have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" He pronounces Jesus innocent; and then, with wondrous inconsistency, delivers Him to be scourged: yields Him up to be crucified, and then tries every underhand expedient to save Him.

What is there in all this but vacillation of character lying at the root of unsettledness of opinion? Here is a man knowing the right and doing the wrong—not willing to do an act of manifest injustice if he can avoid it, but hesitating to prevent it, for fear of a charge against himself—pitiably vacillating because his hands were tied by the consciousness of past guilt and personal danger. How could such a man be certain about any thing? What could a mind, wavering, unstable, like a feather on the wind, know or believe of solid, stable truth, which altereth not, but remaineth like a rock amidst the vicissitudes of the ages and the changeful fashions of the minds of men? "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." "He that is *of* the truth, heareth the voice of truth." To the untrue man all things are untrue. To the vacillating man, who can not know his own mind, all things seem alterable, changeful, unfixed; just as to the man tossed at sea, all things motionless in themselves seem to move round, upward, downward, or around, according to his own movements.

2d. Falseness to his own convictions.

Pilate had a conviction that Jesus was innocent. Instead of acting at once on that, he went and parleyed. He argued and debated till the practical force of the conviction was unsettled.

Now let us distinguish: I do not say that a man is never to re-examine a question once settled. A great Christian writer, whose works are very popular, has advised that when a view has once been arrived at as true, it should be, as it were, laid on the shelf, and never again looked on as an open question: but surely this is false. A young man of twenty-three, with such light as he has, forms his views: is he never to have more light? Is he never to open again the questions which his immature mind has decided on once? Is he never in manhood, with manhood's data and manhood's experience, to modify, or even reverse, what once seemed the very truth itself? Nay, my brethren—the weak pride of consistency, the cowardice which dares not say I have been wrong all my life, the false anxiety which is fostered to be true to our principles rather than to make sure that our principles are true, all this would leave in Romanism the man who is born a Romanist. It is not so: the best and bravest have struggled from error into truth: they listened to their honest doubts, and tore up their old beliefs by the very roots.

Distinguish, however. A man may unsettle the verdict of his intellect: it is at his peril that he tampers with the convictions of his conscience. Every opinion and view must remain an open question, freely to be tried with fresh light. But there are eternal truths of right and wrong, such as the plain moralities and instinctive decencies of social life, upon which it is perilous to argue. There are plain cases of immediate duty where it is only safe to act at once.

Now Pilate was false to his *conscience.* His conviction was that Jesus was innocent. It was not a matter of speculation or probability at all, nor a matter in which fresh evidence was even expected, but a case sifted and examined thoroughly. The Pharisees are persecuting a guiltless man. His claims to royalty are not the civil crime which they would make out. Every charge has fallen to the ground. The clear mind of the Roman procurator saw that, as in sunlight, and he did not try to invalidate that judicial conviction. He tried to get rid of the clear duty which resulted from it. Now it is a habit such as this which creates the temper of skepticism.

I address men of a speculative turn of mind. There is boundless danger in all inquiry which is merely curious. When a man brings a clear and practised intellect to try questions, by the answer to which he does not mean to rule his conduct, let him not marvel if he feels, as life goes on, a sense of desolation; existence a burden, and all uncertain. It is the law of his human nature which binds him; for truth is for the heart rather than the intellect. If it is not *done* it becomes unreal—as gloomily unreal and as dreamily impalpable as it was to Pilate.

3d. The third cause of Pilate's skepticism was the taint of the worldly temper of his day. Pilate had been a public man. He knew life: had mixed much with the world's business, and the world's politics: had come across a multiplicity of opinions, and gained a smattering of them all. He knew how many philosophies and religions pretended to an exclusive possession of truth, and how the pretensions of each were overthrown by another. And his incredulity was but a specimen of the skepticism fashionable in his day. The polished skepticism of a polished, educated Roman, a sagacious man of the world, too much behind the scenes of public life to trust professions of goodness or disinterestedness, or to believe in enthusiasm and a sublime life. And his merciful language, and his desire to save Jesus, was precisely the liberalism current in our days as in his—an utter disbelief in the truths of a world unseen, but at the same time an easy, careless toleration, a half-benevolent, half-indolent unwillingness to molest the poor dreamers who chose to believe in such superstitions.

This is the superficial liberalism which is contracted in public life. Public men contract a rapid way of discussing and dismissing the deepest questions—never going deep—satisfied with the brilliant flippancy which treats religious beliefs as phases of human delusion, seeing the hollowness of the characters around them, and believing that all is hollow; and yet not without their moments of superstition, as when Pilate was afraid, hearing of a Son of God, and connecting it doubtless with the heathen tales of gods who had walked this earth in visible flesh and blood which he had laughed at, and which he now for one moment suspected might be true; not without their moments of horrible insecurity, when the question, "What is truth?" is not a brilliant sarcasm, but a sarcasm on themselves, on human life, on human nature, wrung out of the loneliest and darkest bewilderment that can agonize a human soul.

To such a character Jesus would not explain His truth. He gave no reply: He held His peace. God's truth is too sacred to be expounded to superficial worldliness in its transient fit of earnestness.

4th. Lastly, I assign, as a cause of skepticism, that priestly bigotry which forbids inquiry and makes doubt a crime.

The priests of that day had much to answer for. Consider for a moment the state of things. One—of whom *they* only knew that He was a man of unblemished life—came forward to proclaim the truth. But it was new; they had never heard such views before; they were quite sure *they* had never taught such, nor sanctioned such; and so they settled that the thing was heresy. He had no accredited ordination. "We know that God spake to Moses: as for this fellow we know not whence He is." Then they proceeded to bind that decision upon others. A man was heard to say, "Why, what evil hath he done?" Small offense enough, but it savored of a dangerous candor towards a suspected man; and in the priestly estimate, candor is the next step to heresy. "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost Thou teach us? and they cast him out of the synagogue." And so again with Pilate: they stifled his soul's rising convictions with threats and penalties—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."

This was what they were always doing: they forbade all inquiry, and made doubt of their decision a crime.

Now the results of this priestcraft were twofold. The first result was seen in the fanaticism of the people who cried for blood: the second, in the skepticism of Pilate. And these are the two results which come from all claims to infallibility, and all prohibition of inquiry. They make bigots of the feeble-minded who can not think: cowardly bigots, who at the bidding of their priests or ministers swell the ferocious cry which forces a government, or a judge, or a bishop, to persecute some opinion which they fear and hate; turning private opinion into civil crime: and they make skeptics of the acute intellects which, like Pilate, see through their fallacies, and like Pilate too, dare not publish their misgivings.

And it matters not in what form that claim to infallibility is made: whether in the clear, consistent way in which Rome asserts it, or whether in the inconsistent way in which churchmen make it for their church, or religious bodies for their favorite opinions: wherever penalties attach to a conscientious conviction, be they the penalties of the rack and flame, or the penalties of being suspected, and avoided, and slandered, and the slur of heresy affixed to the name, till all men count him dangerous lest they too should be put out of the synagogue; and let every man who is engaged in persecuting any opinion ponder it—these two things must follow—you make fanatics, and you make skeptics; believers you can not make.

Therefore do we stand by the central protest and truth of Protestantism. There is infallibility nowhere on this earth: not in Rome; not in councils or convocations; not in the Church of England; not in priests; not in ourselves. The soul is thrown in the grandeur of a sublime solitariness on God. Woe to the spirit that stifles its convictions when priests threaten, and the mob which they have maddened cries heresy, and insinuates disloyalty—"Thou art not Cæsar's friend."

II. The mode appointed for discovering the reply to the question, "What is truth?"

Observe—I do not make our second division that which might seem the natural one—what truth is. I am not about to be guilty of the presumption of answering the question which Jesus did not answer. Some persons hearing the text might think it the duty of any man who took it as a text to preach upon, to lay down what truth is: and if a minister were so to treat it, he might give you the fragment of truth which his own poor mind could grasp: and he might call it, as the phrase is, *The* Truth, or *The* Gospel: and he might require his hearers to receive it on peril of salvation. And then he would have done as the priests did; and they who lean on other minds would have gone away bigoted; and they who *think* would have smiled sadly, bitterly, or sarcastically, and gone home to doubt still more, "What *is* truth, and is it to be found?"

No, my brethren! The truth can not be compressed into a sermon. The reply to Pilate's question can not be contained in any verbal form. Think you that if Christ Himself could have answered that question in a certain number of sentences, He would have spent thirty years of life in witnessing to it? Some men would compress into the limits of one reply or one discourse the truth which it took Christ thirty years to teach, and which He left unfinished for the Spirit to complete.

One word more. The truth is infinite as the firmament above you. In childhood, both seem near and measurable; but with years they grow and grow, and seem farther off, and farther and grander, and deeper and vaster, as God Himself; till you smile to remember how you thought you could touch the sky, and blush to recollect the proud and self-sufficient way in which you used to talk of knowing or preaching "the truth."

And once again: the truth is made up of principles: an inward life, not any mere formula of words. God's character—spiritual worship—the Divine life in the soul. How shall I put that into sentences ten or ten thousand? "The words which I speak unto you, they are truth, and they are *life*." How could Pilate's question be answered except by a Life? The truth, then, which Pilate wanted—which you want, and I want—is not the boundless verities, but truth of inward life. Truth for me: Truth enough to guide me in this darkling world · enough to teach me how to live and how to die.

Now—the appointed ways to teach this Truth. They are three: independence—humbleness—action.

First, Independence. Let no man start as if independence savored of presumption. Protestant independence, they tell us, is pride and self-reliance, but in truth it is nothing more than a deep sense of personal responsibility; a determination to trust in God rather than in man to teach: in God and God's light in the soul. You choose a guide among precipices and glaciers, but you walk for yourself; you judge his opinion, though more experienced than your own; you over rule it if needs be; you use your own strength, you rely on your own nerves. That is independence.

You select your own physician, deciding upon the respective claims of men, the most ignorant of whom knows more of the matter than you. You prudently hesitate at times to follow the advice of the one you trust most, yet that is only independence without a particle of presumption.

And so precisely in matters of religious truth. No man cares for your health as you do; therefore you rely blindly upon none. No man has the keeping of your own soul, or cares for it as you do. For yourself, therefore, you inquire and think, and you refuse to delegate that work to bishop, priest, or church. Call they that presumption? Oh, the man who knows the awful feeling of being alone, and struggling for truth as for life and death, he knows the difference between independence and presumption.

Second, Humbleness. There is no infallibility in man; if so, none in us. *We* may err: that one thought is enough to keep a man humble. There are two kinds of temper contrary to this spirit. The first is a disputing, captious temper. Disagreement is refreshing when two men lovingly desire to compare their views to find out the truth. Controversy is wretched when it is an attempt to prove one another wrong. Therefore Christ would not *argue* with Pilate. Religious controversy does only harm. It destroys the humble inquiry after truth: it throws all the energies into an attempt to prove ourselves right. The next temper contrary is a hopeless spirit. Pilate's question breathed of hopelessness. He felt that Jesus was unjustly condemned, but he thought Him in views as hopelessly wrong as the rest: all were wrong. What was truth? Who knew any thing about it? He spoke too bitterly, too hopelessly, too disappointedly to get an answer. In that despairing spirit no man gets at truth: "*The meek* will He guide in judgment. . . ."

Lastly, Action. This was Christ's rule—"If any man will *do* His will. . . ." A blessed rule: a plain and simple rule. Here we are in a world of mystery, where all is difficult, and very much dark—where a hundred jarring creeds declare themselves to be the truth, and all are plausible. How shall a man decide? Let him *do* the right that lies before him: much is uncertain—some things at least are clear. Whatever else may be wrong, it *must* be right to be pure—to be just and tender, and merciful and honest. It *must* be right to love, and to deny one's self. Let him do the will of God, and he shall know. Observe—men begin the other way. They say, If I could but believe, then I would make my life true: if I could but be sure what is truth, then I would set to work to live in earnest. No: God says, Act; make the life true, and then you will be able to believe. Live in earnest, and you will know the answer to "What is truth?"

Infer the blessedness of belief. Young men are prone to consider skepticism a proof of strong-mindedness—a something to be proud of. Let Pilate be a specimen—and a wretched one he is. He had clear-mindedness enough to be dissatisfied with all the views he knew: enough to see through and scorn the squabbles and superstitions of priests and bigots. All well, if from doubt of falsehood he had gone on to a belief in a higher truth. But doubt, when it left him doubting—why, he missed the noblest opportunity man ever had—that of saving the Saviour: he became a thing for the people to despise, and after ages to pity. And that is skepticism. Call you that a manly thing?

To believe is to be happy; to doubt is to be wretched. But I will not urge that. Seventy years—and the most fevered brain will be still enough. We will not say much of the wretchedness of doubt. To believe is to be *strong.* Doubt cramps energy. Belief is power. Only so far as a man believes strongly, mightily, can he act cheerfully, or do any thing that is worth the doing.

I speak to those who have learned to hold cheap the threats wherewith priests and people would terrify into acquiescence—to those who are beyond the appeal of fear, and can only yield, if at all, to higher motives. Young men, the only manly thing, the only strong thing, is faith. It is not so far as a man doubts, but so far as he believes, that he can achieve or perfect any thing. "All things are possible to *him that believeth.*"

XXII.

THE ISRAELITE'S GRAVE IN A FOREIGN LAND.*

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."—Gen. l. 24–26.

THERE is a moment when a man's life is re-lived on earth. It is in that hour in which the coffin-lid is shut down, just before the funeral, when earth has seen the last of him forever. Then the whole life is, as it were, lived over again in the conversation which turns upon the memory of the departed. The history of threescore years and ten is soon recapitulated: not, of course, the innumerable incidents and acts which they contained, but the central governing principle of the whole. Feverish curiosity sometimes spends itself upon the last hours: and a few correct sentences, implying faith after the orthodox phraseology, would convey to some greater hope than a whole life breathing the Spirit of Christ separate from such sentences. But it is not thus the Bible speaks. It tells us very little of the closing scene, but a great deal of the general tenor of a life. In truth, the closing scene is worth very little. The felon, who, up to the last fortnight, has shown his impenitence by the plea of not guilty, in the short compass of that fortnight makes a confession, as a matter of course exhibits the externals of penitence, and receives the Last Supper. But it would be credulity, indeed, to be easily persuaded that the eternal state of such an one is affected by it. A life of holiness sometimes mysteriously terminates in darkness; but it is not the bitterest cries of forsakenness—so often the result of physical exhaustion—nor even blank despair, that shall shake our deep conviction that he whose faith shone brightly through life is now safe in the everlasting arms. The dying scene is worth little—little, at least, to us—except so far as it is in harmony with the rest of life.

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* [*This sermon was formerly published by the Author in a separate form, and the following Preface to that publication explains so well the circumstances under which all the other sermons have been preserved, that it has been thought best to reprint the Preface here.*]

"For the publication of the commonplace observations contained in the following pages, the commonplace excuse may, perhaps, suffice, that printing was the simplest way of multiplying copies for a few friends who desired them. Perhaps, too, the uncommonness of the occasion may justify the writer in giving to an ephemeral discourse an existence somewhat less transient than the minutes spent in listening to it.

"The sermon is published as nearly as possible as it was spoken. It was written out concisely for a friend on the day of its delivery, with no intention of publication. Afterwards, it seemed better to leave it in that state, with only a few corrections, and the addition of a few sentences, than to attempt to re-write it after an interval too great to recall what had been said. This will account for the abruptness and want of finish which pervades the composition.

"The writer takes this opportunity of disowning certain sermons which have been published in his name. They would not have been worth notice, had not the innumerable blunders of thought and expression which they contain been read and accepted by several as his. For this reason he feels it due to himself to state that they are published without his sanction, and against his request, and that he is not responsible for either the language or the ideas."

It is for this reason that the public estimate pronounced upon the departed is generally a fair criterion of worth. There are, of course, exceptional cases—cases in which the sphere of action has been too limited for the fair development of the character, and nothing but the light of the judgment-day can reveal it in its true aspect—cases in which party spirit has defaced a name, and years are wanted to wash away the mask of false color which has concealed the genuine features—cases in which the champion of truth expires amidst the execrations of his contemporaries, and after ages build his sepulchre. These, however, are exceptions. For the most part, when all is over, general opinion is not far from truth. Misrepresentation and envy have no provocatives left them. What the departed was is tolerably well-known in the circle in which he moved. The epitaph may be falsified by the partiality of relations; but the broad judgment of society reverses that, rectifies it, and pronounces with perhaps a rude, but, on the whole, fair approximation to the truth.

These remarks apply to the history of the man whose final scene is recorded in the text. The verdict of the Egyptian world was worth much. Joseph had gone to Egypt, some years before, a foreigner; had lived there in obscurity; had been exposed to calumny; by his quiet, consistent goodness, had risen, step by step, first to respect, then to trust, command, and veneration: was embalmed after death in the affections, as well as with the burial rights, of the Egyptians; and his honored form reposed at last amidst the burial-place of the Pharaohs.

In this respect the text branches into a twofold division. The life of Joseph, and the death which was in accordance with that life.

1. The history of Joseph, as of every man, has two sides—its outward circumstances and its inner life.

The outward circumstances were checkered with misfortune. Severed from his home in very early years, sold into slavery, cast into prison—at first grief seemed to have marked him for her own. And this is human life. Part of its lot is misery. There are two inadequate ways of accounting for this mystery of sorrow. One, originating in a zeal for God's justice, represents it as invariably the chastisement of sin, or, at the least, as correction for fault. But, plainly, it is not always such. Joseph's griefs were the consequences, not of fault, but of rectitude. The integrity which, on some unknown occasion, made it his duty to carry his brethren's "evil report" to their father, was the occasion of his slavery. The purity of his life was the cause of his imprisonment. Fault is only a part of the history of this great matter of sorrow. Another theory, created by zeal for God's love, represents sorrow as the exception, and happiness as the rule of life. We are made for enjoyment. it is said, and on the whole there is more enjoyment than wretchedness. The common idea of love being that which identifies it with a simple wish to confer happiness, no wonder that a feeble attempt is made to vindicate God by a reduction of the apparent amount of pain. Unquestionably, however, love is very different from a desire to shield from pain. Eternal love gives to painlessness a very subordinate place in comparison of excellence of character. It does not hesitate to secure man's spiritual dignity at the expense of the sacrifice of his well-being.

The solution will not do. Let us look the truth in the face. You can not hide it from yourself. "Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward." Sorrow is not an accident, occurring now and then, it is the very woof which is woven into the warp of life. God has created the nerves to agonize, and the heart to bleed; and before a man dies, almost every nerve has thrilled with pain, and every affection has been wounded. The account of life which represents it as probation is inadequate: so is that which regards it chiefly as a system of rewards and punishments. The truest account of this mysterious existence seems to be that it is intended for the development of the soul's life, for which sorrow is indispensable. Every son of man who would attain the true end of his being must be baptized with fire. It is the law of our humanity, as that of Christ, that we must be perfected through suffering. And he who has not discerned the divine sacredness of sorrow, and the profound meaning which is concealed in pain, has yet to learn what life is. The Cross, manifested as the necessity of the highest life, alone interprets it.

2. Besides this, obloquy was part of Joseph's portion. His brethren, even his father, counted him a vain dreamer, full of proud imaginings. He languished long in a dungeon with a stain upon his character. He was subjected to almost all the bitterness which changes the milk of kindly feelings into gall: to Potiphar's fickleness, to slander, to fraternal envy, to the ingratitude of friendship in the neglect of the chief butler, who left his prison and straightway forgot his benefactor. Out of all which a simple lesson arises, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Yet that may be overstated. Nothing chills the heart like universal distrust. Nothing freezes the genial current of the soul so much as doubts of human nature. Human goodness is no dream. Surely we have met unselfishness, and love, and honor among men. Surely we have seen, and not in dreams, pure benevolence beaming from human countenances. Surely we have met with integrity that the world's wealth could not bribe; and attachment which might bear the test of any sacrifice. It is not so much the depravity as the frailty of men, that makes it impossible to count on them. Was it not excusable in Jacob, and even natural, if he attributed to vanity his son's relation of the dream in which the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down before him? Was it not excusable if Potiphar distrusted his tried servant's word, when his guilt appeared so indisputably substantiated? Was not even the chief butler's forgetfulness intelligible, when you remember his absorbing interest in his own danger, and the multiplied duties of his office? The world is not to be too severely blamed if it misrepresents us. It is hard to reach the truth—very hard to sift a slander.

Men who believe such rumors, especially in courtly life, may be ignorant, hasty, imperfect, but are not necessarily treacherous. Yet even while you keep this in mind, that the heart may not be soured, remember your dearest friend may fail you in the crisis: a truth of experience was wrapped up in the old fable, and the thing you have fostered in your bosom may wound you to the quick; the one you have trusted may become your accuser, and throw his own blame, with dastard meanness, upon you. That was the experience of Joseph. Was not that His fate who trusted Judas? There is One, and but One, whose love is as a rock which will not fail you when you cling. It is a fearful, solitary feeling, that lonely truth of life; yet not without a certain strength and grandeur in it. The life that is the deepest and the truest will feel most vividly both its desolation and its majesty. We live and die alone. God and our own souls—we fall back upon them at last. "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

3. Success, besides, marked the career of Joseph. Let us not take half views of men and things. The woof of life is dark; that we granted: but it is shot through a web of brightness. Accordingly, in Joseph's case, even in his worst days, you find a kind of balance to be weighed against his sorrows. The doctrine of compensation is found through all. Amidst the schemings of his brothers' envy he had his father's love. In his slavery he had some recompense in feeling that he was gradually winning his master's confidence. In his dungeon he possessed the consciousness of innocence, and the grateful respect of his fellow-prisoners.

In that beautiful hymn which some of you read last Sunday,* you may remember that a parallel is drawn between human life and the aspects of the weather. The morning rainbow, glittering among the dangerous vapors of the west, predicts that the day will not unclouded pass away. The evening rainbow declares that the storms are past, and that serene weather is setting in. Such is the life of all whom God disciplines. The morning or the evening brightness is the portion of a life, the rest of which is storm. Rarely are the manful struggles of principle in the first years of life suffered to be in vain. Joseph saw the early clouds which darkened the morning of his existence pass away, and the rainbow of heavenly peace arched over the calmness of his later years. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." And it is for this special purpose it is written, "And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up on Joseph's knees." Long life, and honored old age, a quiet grave; these were the blessings reckoned desirable in Jewish modes of thought: and they are mentioned as evidences of Joseph's happiness.

And this, too, is life. The sorrows of the past stand out most vividly in our recollections, because they are the keenest of our sensations. At the end of a long existence we should probably describe it thus: "Few and evil have the days of the years of thy servant been." But the innumerable infinitesimals of happiness that from moment to moment made life sweet and pleasant are forgotten; and very richly has our Father mixed the materials of these with the homeliest actions and domesticities of existence. See two men meeting together in the streets—mere acquaintances. They will not be five minutes together before a smile will overspread their countenances, or a merry laugh ring of, at the lowest, amusement. This has God done. God created the smile and the laugh, as well as the sigh and the tear. The aspect of this life is stern—very stern. It is a very superficial account of it which slurs over its grave mystery, and refuses to hear its low, deep under-tone of anguish. But there is enough, from hour to hour, of bright, sunny happiness, to remind us that its Creator's highest name is love.

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* Keble's Christian Year. Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Now turn to the spirit of Joseph's inner life. First of all, that life was forgiveness. You can not but have remarked that, conversant as his experience was with human treachery, no expressions of bitterness escape from him. No sentimental wailing over the cruelty of relations, the falseness of friendship, or the ingratitude of the world; no rancorous outburst of misanthropy; no sarcastic skepticism of man's integrity or woman's honor. He meets all bravely, with calm, meek, and dignified forbearance. If ever man had cause for such doubts, he had; yet his heart was never soured. At last, after his father's death, his brothers, apprehending his resentful recollections of their early cruelty, come to deprecate his revenge. Very touching is his reply. "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones.'

This is the Christian spirit before the Christian times. Christ was in Joseph's heart, though not definitely in Joseph's creed. The Eternal Word whispered in the souls of men before it spoke articulately aloud in the Incarnation. It was the Divine Thought before it became the Divine Expression.* It was the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, before it blazed into the Day-spring from on high which visited us. The mind of Christ, the spirit of the years yet future, blended itself with life before He came; for His words were the eternal verities of our humanity. In all ages love is the truth of life. Men can not injure us except so far as they exasperate us to forget ourselves. No man is really dishonored except by his own act. Calumny, injustice, ingratitude—the only harm these can do us is by making us bitter, or rancorous, or gloomy: by shutting our hearts or souring our affections. We rob them of their power if they only leave us more sweet and forgiving than before. And this is the only true victory. We win by love. Love transmutes all curses, and forces them to rain down in blessings. Out of the jealousy of his brothers Joseph extracted the spirit of forgiveness. Out of Potiphar's weak injustice, and out of the machinations of disappointed passion, he created an opportunity of learning meekness. Our enemies become unconsciously our best friends when their slanders deepen in us heavenlier graces. Let them do their worst; they only give us the Godlike victory of forgiving them.

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* *Λόγος ἐνδι ἰθετος—προφορικὸς.*

2. Distinguished from the outward circumstances, we find simplicity of character: partly in the willingness to acknowledge his shepherd-father in Egypt, where the pastoral life was an abomination; partly in that incidental notice which we have of the feast at which he entertained his brethren, where the Egyptians sat at a table by themselves, and Joseph by himself. So that, elevated as he was, his heart remained Hebrew still. He had contracted a splendid alliance by marrying into one of the noblest families in Egypt, that of Potipherah, the priest of On. And yet he had not forgotten his country, nor sought to be naturalized there. His heart was in that far land where he had fed his father's flocks in his simple, genial boyhood; the divining-cup of Egyptian silver was on his table; but he remembered the days when the only splendor he knew was that coat of many colors which was made for him by his father. He bore a simple, unsophisticated heart amidst the pomp of an Egyptian court.

There is a great mistake made on the subject of simplicity. There is one simplicity of circumstances, another simplicity of heart. These two must not be confounded. It is common to talk of the humble poor man, and the proud rich man. Let not these ideas be inseparably blended together. There is many a man who sits down to a meal of bread and milk on a wooden table, whose heart is as proud as the proudest whose birth is royal. There is many a one whose voice is heard in the public meeting, loudly descanting on legal tyranny and aristocratic insolence, who in his own narrow circle is as much a tyrant as any oppressor who ever disgraced the throne. And there is many a man who sits down to daily pomp, to whom gold and silver are but as brass and tin, and who bears in the midst of it all a meek, simple spirit, and a "heart refrained as a weaned child:" many a man who lives surrounded with homage, and hearing the applause and flattery of men perpetually, on whose heart these things fall flat and dead, without raising one single emotion of fluttered vanity.

The world can not understand this. They can not believe that Joseph can be humble while he is conscious of such elevation above the crowd of men—not even dreaming of it. They can not understand how carelessly these outsides of life can be worn, and how they fall off like the unregarded and habitual dress of daily life. They can not know how the spirit of the Cross can crucify the world, make grandeur painful, and calm the soul with a vision of the Eternal Beauty. They can not dream how His life and death, once felt as the grandest, write mockery on all else, and fill the soul with an ambition which is above the world. It is not the unjewelled finger, nor the affectation of an almost Quakerish simplicity of attire, nor the pedestrian mode of travelling, nor the scanty meal that constitute humility. It is that simple, inner life of real greatness, which is indifferent to magnificence, and surrounded by it all, lives far away in the distant country of a father's home, with the Cross borne silently and self-sacrificingly in the heart of hearts.

3. One characteristic of Joseph's inner life remains—benevolence. It was manifested in the generosity with which he entertained his brethren, and in the discriminating tenderness with which he provided his best beloved brother's feast with extraordinary delicacies. These were traits of thoughtfulness. But further still. The prophetic insight of Joseph enabled him to foresee the approach of famine. He took measures accordingly; and when the famine came, the royal storehouses were opened, and every man in Egypt owed his life to the benevolent providence of the Hebrew stranger. It was productive of a great social revolution. It brought, by degrees, all the land of Egypt into the power of the Crown, so that a kind of feudal system was established, every man holding in direct tenancy from the Crown. Hence the nation became compacted into a new unity, and power was concentrated in the hands of government, partly by the pecuniary revenue thus added, and partly by the lustre of goodness which Joseph had thrown round the royal acts. For acts like these are the real bulwarks of a throne. One such man as Joseph does more to strengthen the Crown than all the speculations, solemn or trifling, which were ever

written on the "Divine right of kings." There *is* a right divine which requires no elaborate theory to make it felt.

II. The death of Joseph was in accordance with his life.

1. The funeral was a homage paid to goodness. Little is said in the text of Joseph's funeral. To know what it was, we must turn to the earlier part of the chapter, where that of Jacob is mentioned. A mourning of seventy days—a funeral whose imposing greatness astonished the Canaanites. They said, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." Seventy days were the time, or nearly so, fixed by custom for a royal funeral; and Jacob was so honored, not for his own sake, but because he was Joseph's father. We can not suppose that Joseph's own obsequies were on a scale less grand.

Now weigh what is implied in this. This was not the homage paid to talent, nor to wealth, nor to birth. Joseph was a foreign slave, raised to eminence by the simple power of goodness. Every man in Egypt felt, at his death, that he had lost a friend. There were thousands whose tears would fall when they recounted the preservation of lives dear to them in the years of famine, and felt that they owed those lives to Joseph. Grateful Egypt mourned the good Foreigner; and, for once, the honors of this world were given to the graces of another.

2. We collect from this, besides, a hint of the resurrection of the body. The Egyptian mode of sepulture was embalming; and the Hebrews, too, attached much importance to the body after death. Joseph commanded his countrymen to preserve his bones to take away with them. In this we detect that unmistakable human craving, not only for immortality, but immortality associated with a form. No doubt the Egyptian feeling was carried out absurdly. They tried to redeem from the worm the very aspect that had been worn, the very features they had loved; and there was a kind of feeling, that while that mummy lasted, the man had not yet perished from earth. They expected that, in process of years, it would again be animated by its spirit.

Now Christianity does not disappoint, but rather meets that feeling. It grants all that the materialist, and all that the spiritualist, have a right to ask. It grants to the materialist, by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, that future life shall be associated with a material form. Leaving untouched all the questions which may be raised about the identity of the atoms that have been buried, it simply pronounces that the spirit shall have a body. It grants to the spiritualist all he ought to wish—that the spirit shall be free from evil. For it is a mistake of ultra-spiritualism, to connect degradation with the thought of a risen body; or to suppose that a mind, unbound by the limitations of space, is a more spiritual idea of resurrection than the other.

The opposite to spirituality is not materialism, but sin. The form of matter does not degrade. For what is this world itself but the form of Deity, whereby the manifoldness of His mind and beauty manifests, and wherein it clothes itself? It is idle to say that spirit can exist apart from form. We do not know that it can. Perhaps even the Eternal Himself is more closely bound to His works than our philosophical systems have conceived. Perhaps matter is only a mode of thought. At all events, all that we know or can know of mind, exists in union with form. The resurrection of the body is the Christian verity, which meets and satisfies those cravings of the ancient Egyptian mind that expressed themselves in the process of embalming, and the religious reverence felt for the very bones of the departed by the Hebrews.

Finally, in the last will and testament of Joseph we find faith. He commanded his brethren, and through them, his nation, to carry his bones with them when they migrated to Canaan. In the Epistle to the Hebrews that is reckoned an evidence of faith. "By faith Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones." How did he know that his people would ever quit Egypt? We reply, by faith. Not faith in a written word, for Joseph had no Bible; rather, faith in that conviction of his own heart which is itself the substantial evidence of faith. For religious faith ever dreams of something higher, more beautiful, more perfect, than the state of things with which it feels itself surrounded. Ever, a day future lies before it: the evidence for which is its own hope. Abraham, by that creative faith, saw the day of Christ, and was glad. Joseph saw his family in prosperity, even in affluence; but he felt that this was not their rest. A higher life than that of affluence—a nobler destiny than that of stagnant rest, there must be for them in the future; else all the anticipations of a purer earth, and a holier world, which imagination bodied forth within his soul, were empty dreams, not the intuitions of God's Spirit. It was this idea of perfection, which was "the substance of things hoped for," that carried him far beyond the period of his own death, and made him feel himself a partaker of his nation's blessed future.

And that is the evidence of immortality. When the coffin is lowered into the grave, and the dull, heavy sound of earth falling on it is heard, there are some to whom that sound seems but an echo of their worst anticipations; seems but to reverberate the idea of decay forever, in the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." There are others to whom it sounds pregnant with the expectations of immortality, the "sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life." The difference between these two feelings is measured by the difference of lives. They whose life is low and earthly, how can they believe in aught beyond the grave, when nothing of that life which is eternal has yet stirred within them? They who have lived as Joseph lived, just in proportion to their purity and their unselfishness, must believe it. They can not but believe it. The eternal existence is already pulsing in their veins; the life of trust and high hope, and sublime longings after perfection, with which the decay of the frame has nothing at all to do. That is gone—yes—but it was not that life in which they lived, and when it finished, what had that ruin to do with the destruction of the immortal?

For what is our proof of immortality? Not the analogies of nature—the resurrection of nature from a winter grave—or the emancipation of the butterfly. Not even the testimony to the fact of risen dead; for who does not know how shadowy and unsubstantial these intellectual proofs become in unspiritual frames of mind? No; the life of the spirit is the evidence. Heaven begun is the living proof that makes the heaven to come credible. "Christ in you is the hope of glory." It is the eagle eye of faith which penetrates the grave, and sees far into the tranquil things of death. He alone can believe in immortality who feels the resurrection in him already.

There is a special application to be made of this subject to our hearts. It is not often that the pulpit can be used for a funeral eulogium. Where Christ is to be exalted in solitary pre-eminence, it is but rarely that the praise of men may be heard. Rank, royalty itself, could not command from the lips of a minister of the King of kings one syllable of adulatory, undeserved, or unfelt homage. But there are cases in which to loftiness of birth is added dignity of character; and then we gladly relax the rule, to pay a willing tribute to the majesty of goodness.

There is one to whom your thoughts must have reverted often during the history which we have been going through, suggesting a parallel, all the more delicately felt from the absence of direct allusion. That royal lady, for whose loss the marvellous uniformity of the unbroken funeral hue which pervades this congregation tells eloquently of general mourning, came to this land a few years ago, like Joseph, a foreigner—like Joseph, the earlier years of her sojourn were spent in comparative obscurity—like Joseph, she had her share of calumny, though in a different form. There are many here who can remember that in that year when our political feuds had attained the acme of rancor, the irreverent lip of party slander dared to breathe its rank venom upon the name of one of the gentlest that ever adorned a throne. There are some who know how that unpopularity was met: with meekness—with Christian forgiveness—with quiet dignity—with that composure which is the highest result and evidence of strength. Like Joseph, she passed through the temptations of a court with unsullied spotlessness—like Joseph, the domestic and social relationships were sustained with beautiful fidelity—like Joseph, she lived down opposition, outlived calumny—like Joseph, she used the noble income intrusted to her in acts of almost unexampled munificence—like Joseph, her life was checkered with sorrow; and when the clouds of earlier difficulties had cleared away, the rainbow sign of peace, even in the midst of broken health, spanned the calmness of her evening years—like Joseph, she will have a regal burial, and her ashes will repose with the dust of England's princes amidst the mourning of the nation in which she found a home.

The homage which is given to her is not the homage yielded to rank or wealth or genius. There will be silver on her coffin, and magnificence in the pageantry which attends her to the grave;* but it is not in these that the glory of her funeral lies. These were the privileges of the most profligate of her ancestors as well as her. These are the world's rewards for those whom she delights to honor. There will be something in her funeral besides which these things are mean. There is a grandeur in a nation's tears; and they will be shed in unfeigned reverence over the remains of all that was most queenly, and all that was most womanly. No political fervor mixes with her obsequies. She stood identified with no party politics. No peculiar religious party mourns its patroness. Of all our jarring religious sects, in the Church and out of it, not one dares to claim her as its own. Her spirit soared above these things. It is known that she scarcely recognized them. All was lost in the sublimer name of Christian. It is a *Christian* who has passed from this earth away, to take her place in the general Assembly and Church of the first-born: to stand before God, the Judge of all, among the spirits of the just made perfect.

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* This anticipation has not been realized. In one of the most touching and unaffected documents that ever went right home to English hearts, the queen of a British sovereign requested to be borne to the grave as the wife of a sailor.

One word more. Honoring the Queen, profoundly reverencing the Woman, let not contemplation stop there. Do not bury thought in the human and finite. Mildly as her lustre shone on earth, remember it was but one feeble ray of the Light that is Uncreated. All that she had she received. If we honor her, it is to adore Him who made her what she was. Of His fullness she had received, and grace for grace. What she was, she became through adoring faith in Christ. It is an elevating thing to gaze on human excellence, because through it the Highest becomes conceivable. It is a spirit-stirring thing to see saintly goodness asserting its celestial origin by turning pale the lustre of the highest earthly rank; for in this universal mourning our noble country has not bowed the knee in reverence to the majesty which is of time. Every heart in England has felt that the sovereign was merged in the servant of Christ. "The King's daughter was all glorious within." Hers was *Christian* goodness. Her eyes had beheld the King in His beauty, and therefore her life was beautiful, and feminine, and meek, and simple. It was all derived beauty. She had robed herself in Christ. "Reflecting back, as from a burnished mirror, the glory of the Lord, she was changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. This appears to be the true force and rendering of the metaphor.

Subjoined are the directions given by her late Majesty for her own funeral. The reader will be glad to have them preserved in a form less inconvenient than the columns of a newspaper. Should he be one who feels it a relief to miss, for once, the worn-out conventionalisms of religious expression, and come in contact with something fresh and living, he will find more in these quiet lines than in ten sermons; more to make a very happy tear start; more of the simplicity and the beauty of the life in God; more to cool the feverishness of his heart, and still its worldliness into silence; more of that deep rest into which the meek and humble enter; more that will make him long to be simple, and inartificial, and real, as Christ was, desiring only, in life, and death, and judgment, to be found in Him.

[Copy.]

"I die in all humility, knowing well that we are all alike before the Throne of God, and request, therefore, that my mortal remains be conveyed to the grave without any pomp or state. They are to be moved to St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where I request to have as private and quiet a funeral as possible.

"I particularly desire not to be laid out in state, and the funeral to take place by daylight, no procession, the coffin to be carried by sailors to the chapel.

"All those of my friends and relations, to a limited number, who wish to attend, may do so. My nephew, Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, Lords Howe and Denbigh, the Hon. William Ashley, Mr. Wood, Sir Andrew Barnard, and Sir D. Davis, with my dressers, and those of my ladies who may wish to attend.

"I die in peace, and wish to be carried to the tomb in peace, and free from the vanities and the pomp of this world.

"I request not to be dissected, nor embalmed; and desire to give as little trouble as possible.

(Signed) "Adelaide R.

"November, 1849."

SERMONS

Second Series.

I.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."—Matt. ii. 1, 2.

Our subject is the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. The King of the Jews has become the Sovereign of the world: a fact, one would think, which must cause a secret complacency in the heart of all Jews. For that which is most deeply working in modern life and thought is the mind of Christ. His name has passed over our institutions, and much more has His spirit penetrated into our social and domestic existence. In other words, a Hebrew mind is now, and has been for centuries, ruling Europe.

But the Gospel which He proclaimed was not limited to the Hebrews: it was a Gospel for the nations. By the death of Christ, God has struck His death-blow at the root of the hereditary principle. "We be the seed of Abraham" was the proud pretension of the Israelite; and he was told by Christ's Gospel that spiritual dignity rests not upon spiritual descent, but upon spiritual character. New tribes were adopted into the Christian union, and it became clear that there was no distinction of race in the spiritual family. The Jewish rite of circumcision—a symbol of exclusiveness, cutting off one nation from all others—was exchanged for Baptism, the symbol of universality, proclaiming the nearness of all to God, His paternity over the human race, and the Sonship of all who chose to claim their privileges.

This was a Gospel for the world, and nation after nation accepted it. Churches were formed; the kingdom which is the domain of love grew; the Roman Empire crumbled into fragments; but every fragment was found pregnant with life. It brake not as some ancient temple might break, its broken pieces lying in lifeless ruin, overgrown with weeds: rather as one of those mysterious animals break, of which, if you rend them asunder, every separate portion forms itself into a new and complete existence. Rome gave way; but every portion became a Christian kingdom, alive with the mind of Christ, and developing the Christian idea after its own peculiar nature.

The portion of Scripture selected for the text and for the gospel of the day has an important bearing on this great Epiphany. The "wise men" belonged to a creed of very hoary and venerable antiquity; a system, too, which had in it the elements of strong vitality. For seven centuries after, the Mohammedan sword scarcely availed to extirpate it—indeed could not. They whom the Mohammedan called fire-worshippers clung to their creed with vigor and indestructible tenacity, in spite of all his efforts.

Here then, in this act of homage to the Messiah, were the representatives of the highest then existing influences of the world, doing homage to the Lord of a mightier influence, and reverently bending before the dawn of the Star of a new and brighter Day. It was the first distinct turning of the Gentile mind to Christ; the first instinctive craving after a something higher than Gentilism could ever satisfy.

In this light our thoughts arrange themselves thus:

I. The expectation of the Gentiles.
II. The Manifestation or Epiphany.

I. The expectation: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."

Observe—1. The craving for eternal life. The "wise men" were "Magians," that is, Persian priests. The name, however, was extended to all the Eastern philosophers who professed that religion, or even that philosophy. The Magians were chiefly distinguished by being worshippers of the stars, or students of astronomy.

Now astronomy is a science which arises from man's need of religion; other sciences spring out of wants bounded by this life. For instance, anatomy presupposes disease. There would be no prying into our animal frame, no anatomy, were there not a malady to stimulate the inquiry. Navigation arises from the necessity of traversing the seas to appropriate the produce of other countries. Charts, and maps, and soundings are made, because of a felt earthly want. But in astronomy the first impulse of mankind came not from the craving of the intellect, but from the necessities of the soul.

If you search down into the constitution of your being till you come to the lowest deep of all, underlying all other wants you will find a craving for what is infinite—a something that desires perfection—a wish that nothing but the thought of that which is eternal can satisfy. To the untutored mind nowhere was that want so called into consciousness, perhaps, as beneath the mighty skies of the East. Serene and beautiful are the nights in Persia, and many a wise man in earlier days, full of deep thoughts, went out into the fields like Isaac to meditate at eventide. God has so made us that the very act of looking *up* produces in us perceptions of the sublime. And then those skies in their calm depths mirroring that which is boundless in space and illimitable in time, with a silence profound as death and a motion gliding on forever, as if symbolizing eternity of life, no wonder if men associated with them their highest thoughts, and conceived them to be the home of Deity—no wonder if an Eternal Destiny seemed to sit enthroned there—no wonder if they seemed to have in their mystic motion an invisible sympathy with human life and its mysterious destinies—no wonder if he who could read best their laws was reckoned best able to interpret the duties of this life, and all that connects man with that which is invisible—no wonder if, in those devout days of young thought, science was only another name for religion, and the Priest of the great temple of the universe was also the Priest in the temple made with hands. Astronomy was the religion of the world's youth.

The Magians were led by the star to Christ; their astronomy was the very pathway to their Saviour.

Upon this I make one or two remarks.

1. The folly of depreciating human wisdom. Of all vanities, the worst is the vanity of ignorance. It is common enough to hear learning decried, as if it were an opposite of religion. If that means that science is not religion, and that the man who can calculate the motions of the stars may never have bowed his soul to Christ, it contains a truth. But if it means, as it often does, that learning is a positive incumbrance and hindrance to religion, then it is as much as to say that the God of nature is not the God of grace; that the more you study the Creator's works, the farther you remove from Himself: nay, we must go farther to be consistent, and

hold, as most uncultivated and rude nations do, that the state of idiocy is nearest to that of inspiration.

There are expressions of St. Paul often quoted as sanctioning this idea. He tells his converts to beware "lest any man spoil you through philosophy." Whereupon we take for granted that modern philosophy is a kind of antagonist to Christianity. This is one instance out of many of the way in which an ambiguous word misunderstood becomes the source of infinite error. Let us hear St. Paul. He bids Timothy "beware of profane and old wives' fables." He speaks of "endless genealogies"—"worshipping of angels"—"intruding into those things which men have not seen." This was the philosophy of those days: a system of wild fancies spun out of the brain—somewhat like what we might now call demonolatry: but as different from philosophy as any two things can differ.

They forget, too, another thing. Philosophy has become Christian; science has knelt to Christ. There is a deep significance in that homage of the Magians. For it in fact was but a specimen and type of that which science has been doing ever since. The mind of Christ has not only entered into the Temple, and made it the house of prayer, it has entered into the temple of science, and purified the spirit of philosophy. This is its spirit now, as, expounded by its chief interpreter, "Man, the interpreter of Nature, knows nothing, and can do nothing, except that which Nature teaches him." What is this but science bending before the Child, becoming childlike, and, instead of projecting its own fancies upon God's world, listening reverently to hear what It has to teach him? In a similar spirit, too, spoke the greatest of philosophers, in words quoted in every child's book: "I am but a child, picking up pebbles on the shore of the great sea of truth."

Oh, be sure all the universe tells of Christ and leads to Christ. Rightly those ancient Magians deemed, in believing that God was worshipped truly in that august temple. The stars preach the mind of Christ. Not as of old, when a mystic star guided their feet to Bethlehem, but now, to the mind of the astronomer, they tell of eternal order and harmony; they speak of changeless law, where no caprice reigns. You may calculate the star's return: and to the day, and hour, and minute it will be there. This is the fidelity of God. These mute masses obey the law impressed upon them by their Creator's hand, unconsciously: and that law is the law of their own nature. To understand the laws of our nature, and consciously and reverently to obey them, that is the mind of Christ, the sublimest spirit of the Gospel.

I remark again—This universe may be studied in an irreverent spirit. In Dan. ii. 48, we find the reverence which was paid to science. Daniel among the Chaldees was made chief of the wise men; that is, the first of the Magians: and King Nebuchadnezzar bowed before him, with incense and oblations. In later days we find that spirit changed. Another king, Herod, commands the wise men to use their science for the purpose of letting him know where the Child was. In earlier times they honored the priest of Nature: in later times they made use of him.

Only by a few is science studied now in the sublime and reverent spirit of old days. A vulgar demand for utility has taken the place of that lowly prostration with which the world listened to the discoveries of truth. The discovery of some new and mighty agent, by which the east and west are brought together in a moment, awakens chiefly the emotion of delight in us that correspondence and travelling will be quickened. The merchant congratulates himself upon the speedier arrival of the news which will give him the start of his rivals, and enable him to outrace his competitors in the competition of wealth. Yet what is this but the utilitarian spirit of Herod, seeing nothing more solemn in a mysterious star than the means whereby he might crush his supposed rival?

There is a spirit which believes that "godliness is gain," and aims at being godly for the sake of advantage—which is honest, because honesty is the best policy—which says, Do right, and you will be the better, that is, the richer for it. There is a spirit which seeks for wisdom simply as a means to an earthly end—and that often a mean one. This is a spirit rebuked by the nobler reverence of the earlier days of Magianism. Knowledge for its own pure sake. God for His own sake. Truth for the sake of truth. This was the reason for which, in earlier days, men read the aspect of the heavens.

2. Next, in this craving of the Gentiles we meet with traces of the yearning of the human soul for light. The Magian system was called the system of light about seven centuries before Christ. A great reformer (Zoroaster) had appeared, who either restored the system to its purity, or created out of it a new system. He said that light is eternal—that the Lord of the universe is light; but because there was an eternal light, there was also an eternal possibility of the absence of light. Light and darkness, therefore, were the eternal principles of the universe—not equal principles, but one the negation of the other. He taught that the soul of man needs light—a light external to itself as well as in itself. As the

eye can not see in darkness, and is useless, so is there a capacity in the soul for light; but it is not itself light; it needs the Everlasting light from outside itself.

Hence the stars became worshipped as the symbols of this light. But by degrees these stars began to stand in the place of the light Himself. This was the state of things in the days of these Magians.

Magianism was now midway between its glory and its decline. For its glory we must go back to the days of Daniel, when a monarch felt it his privilege to do honor to the priest of Light—when that priest was the sole medium of communication between Deity and man, and through him alone "Oromasdes" made his revelations known—when the law given by the Magian, revealed by the eternal stars, was "the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not." For its lowest degradation we must pass over about half a century from the time we are now considering till we find ourselves in Samaria, in the presence of Simon the Magian. He gave himself out for the great power of God. He prostituted such powers and knowledge as he possessed to the object of making gain. Half dupe, half impostor, in him the noble system of Light had sunk to petty charlatanism: Magianism had degenerated into Magic.

Midway between these two periods, or rather nearer to the latter, stood the Magian of the text. There is a time in the history of every superstition when it is respectable, even deserving reverence, when men believed it—when it is in fact associated with the highest feelings that are in man, and the channel even for God's manifestation to the soul. And there is a time when it becomes less and less credible, when clearer science is superseding its pretensions: and then is the period in which one class of men like Simon keep up the imposture—the priests who will not let the old superstition die, but go on, half impostors, half deceived by the strong delusion wherewith they believe their own lie—another class, like Herod, the wise men of the world, who patronize it for their own purposes, and make use of it as an engine of state—another still, who turn from side to side, feeling with horror the old, and all that they held dear, crumbling away beneath them: the ancient lights going out, more than half suspecting the falsehood of all the rest, and with an earnestness amounting almost to agony, leaving their own homes and inquiring for fresh light.

Such was the posture of these Magians. You can not enter into their questions or sympathize with their wants unless you realize all this. For that desire for light is one of the most impassioned of our nobler natures. That noble prayer of the ancient world (ἐν δὲ φάει και ὀλεσσον), "Give light, and let us die:" can we not feel it? Light—light Oh, if the result were the immediate realization of the old fable, and the blasting of the daring spirit in the moment of revelation of its God, yet give us light. The wish for light, the expectation of the manifestation of God, is the mystery which lies beneath the history of the whole ancient world.

II. The Epiphany itself.

First, they found a king. There is something very significant in the fact of that king being discovered as a child. The royal child was the answer to their desires. There are two kinds of monarchy, rule or command. One is that of hereditary title; the other is that of Divine Right. There are kings of men's making, and kings of God's making. The secret of that command which men obey involuntarily is submission of the ruler himself to law. And this is the secret of the royalty of the humanity of Christ. No principle through all His life is more striking, none characterizes it so peculiarly, as His submission to another will. "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." "The words which I speak, I speak not of myself." His commands are not arbitrary. They are not laws given on authority only, they are the eternal laws of our humanity, to which He himself submitted: obedience to which alone can make our being attain its end. This is the secret of His kingship—"He became obedient . . . wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." And this is the secret of all influence and all command. Obedience to a law above you subjugates minds to you who never would have yielded to mere will. "Rule thyself, thou rulest all."

2. Next, observe the adoration of the Magians—very touching, and full of deep truth. The wisest of the world bending before the *Child.* Remember the history of Magianism. It began with awe, entering into this world beneath the serene skies of the East; in wonder and worship. It passed into priestcraft and skepticism. It ended in wonder and adoration as it had begun: only with a truer and nobler meaning.

This is but a representation of human life. "Heaven lies around us in our infancy." The child looks on this world of God's as *one*, not many—all beautiful—wonderful—God's—the creation of a Father's hand. The man dissects, breaks it into fragments—loses love and worship in speculation and reasoning—becomes more manly, more independent, and less irradiated with a sense of the presence of the Lord of all; till at last, after many a devious wandering, if he be one whom the Star of God is leading blind by a way he knows not, he begins to see all as one again, and God in all. Back comes the child-like spirit once more in the Christianity of old age. We kneel before the Child—we feel that to adore is greater than to reason—that to love, and worship, and believe, bring the soul nearer heaven than scientific analysis. The Child is nearer God than we.

And this, too, is one of the deep sayings of Christ—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

3. Lastly—In that Epiphany we have to remark the Magians' joy. They had seen the star in the east. They followed it—it seemed to go out in dim obscurity. They went about inquiring: asked Herod, who could tell them nothing: asked the scribes, who only gave them a vague direction. At last the star shone out once more, clear before them in their path. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Perhaps the hearts of some of us can interpret that. There are some who have seen the star that shone in earlier days go out; quench itself in black vapors or sour smoke. There are some who have followed many a star that turned out to be but an ignis fatuus—one of those bright exhalations which hover over marshes and church-yards, and only lead to the chambers of the dead, or the cold damp pits of disappointment: and oh, the blessing of "exceeding joy," after following in vain—after inquiring of the great men and learning nothing—of the religious men and finding little—to see the star at last resting over "the place where the young Child lies"—after groping the way alone, to see the star stand still—to find that Religion is a thing far simpler than we thought—that God is near us—that to kneel and adore is the noblest posture of the soul. For, whoever will follow with fidelity his *own* star, God will guide him aright. He spoke to the Magians by the star; to the shepherds by the melody of the heavenly host; to Joseph by a dream; to Simeon by an inward revelation. "Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh"—these, and ten times these, were poor and cheap to give for that blessed certainty that the star of God is on before us.

Two practical hints in conclusion.

1. A hint of immortality. That star is now looking down on the wise men's graves; and if there be no life to come, then this is the confusion: that mass of inert matter is pursuing its way through space, and the minds that watched it

calculated its movements, were led by it through aspiring wishes to holy adorations; those minds, more precious than a thousand stars, have dropped out of God's universe. And then God cares for mere material masses more than for spirits, which are the emanation and copy of Himself. Impossible! "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." God is the Father of our *spirits.* Eternity and immeasurableness belong to Thought alone. You may measure the cycles of that star by years and miles: can you bring any measurement which belongs to time or space, by which you can compute the length or breadth or the duration of one pure thought, one aspiration, one moment of love? This is eternity. Nothing but thought can be immortal.

2. Learn, finally, the truth of the Epiphany by heart. To the Jew it chiefly meant that the Gentile too could become the child of God. But to us; is that doctrine obsolete? Nay, it requires to be reiterated in this age as much as in any other. There is a spirit in all our hearts whereby we would monopolize God, conceiving of Him as an unapproachable Being; whereby we may terrify other men outside our own pale, instead of as the Father that is near to all, whom we may approach, and whom to adore is blessedness.

This is our Judaism: we do not believe in the Epiphany. We do not believe that God is the Father of the world—we do not actually credit that He has a star for the Persian priest, and celestial melody for the Hebrew shepherd, and an unsyllabled voice for all the humble and inquiring spirits in His world. Therefore remember Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition; He has revealed God as *Our* Father; proclaimed that there is no distinction in the spiritual family, and established a real Brotherhood on earth.

II.

THE HEALING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER.

"And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, he said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose."—Matt. ix. 23–25.

This is one of a pair of miracles, the full instruction from neither of which can be gained, unless taken in connection with the other.

On His way to heal the daughter of Jairus, the Son of Man was accosted by another sufferer, afflicted twelve years with an issue of blood. Humanly speaking, there were many causes which might have led to the rejection of her request. The case of Jairus's daughter was urgent; a matter of life and death; delay might be fatal; a few minutes might make all the difference between living and dying. Yet Jesus not only performed the miracle, but refused to perform it in a hurried way; paused to converse —to inquire who had touched Him—to perfect the lesson of the whole. On his way to perform one act of love, He turned aside to give His attention to another.

The practical lesson is this: There are many who are so occupied by one set of duties as to have no time for others: some whose life-business is the suppression of the slave-trade —the amelioration of the state of prisons—the reformation of public abuses. Right, except so far as they are monopolized by these, and feel themselves discharged from other obligations. The minister's work is spiritual; the physician's temporal. But if the former neglect physical needs, or the latter shrink from spiritual opportunities on the plea that the cure of bodies, not of souls, is his work, so far they refuse to imitate their Master.

He had an ear open for every tone of wail, a heart ready to respond to every species of need. Specially the Redeemer of the soul, He was yet as emphatically the "Saviour of the body." He "taught the people," but he did not neglect to multiply the loaves and fishes. The peculiar need of the woman, the father's cry of anguish, the infant's cry of helplessness, the wail of oppression, and the shriek of pain, all were heard by Him, and none were heard in vain.

Therein lies the difference between Christian love and the impulse of mere inclination. We hear of men being "interested" in a cause. It has some peculiar charm for them individually: the wants of the heathen, or the destitution of the soldier and sailor, or the conversion of the Jews—according to men's associations, or fancies, or peculiar bias—may engage their attention and monopolize their sympathy. I am far from saying these are wrong: I only say that so far as they only *interest*, and monopolize interest, the source from which they spring is only human, and not the highest. The difference between such beneficence and that which is the result of Christian love, is marked by partiality in one case, universality in the other. Love is universal. It is interested in all that is human: not merely in the concerns of its own family, nation, sect, or circle of associations. Humanity is the sphere of its activity.

Here, too, we find the Son of Man the pattern of our humanity. His bosom was to mankind what the ocean is to the world. The ocean has its own mighty tide; but it receives and responds to, in exact proportion, the tidal influences of every estuary, and river, and small creek which pours into its bosom. So it was in Christ; His bosom heaved with the tides of our humanity; but every separate sorrow, pain, and joy gave its pulsation, and received back influence from the sea of His being.

Looking at this matter somewhat more closely, it will be plain that the delay was only apparent—seemingly there was delay, and fatal delay: while He yet spake there came news of the child's death. But just so far as the resurrection of the dead is a mightier miracle than the healing of the sick, just so far did the delay enhance and illustrate, instead of dimming the glory of His mission.

But more definitely still. The miracles of Jesus were not merely arbitrary acts: they were subject to the laws of the spiritual world. It was, we may humbly say, impossible to convey a spiritual blessing to one who was not spiritually susceptible. A certain inward character, a certain relation (*rapport*) to the Redeemer, was required to make the mercy efficacious. Hence in one place we read, "He could not do many miracles there because of their unbelief." And His perpetual question was, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?"

Now Jairus beheld this miracle. He saw the woman's modest touch approaching the hem of the Saviour's garment. He saw the abashed look with which she shrunk from public gaze and exposure. He heard the language of Omniscience, "Somebody hath touched Me." He heard the great principle enunciated, that the only touch which reaches God is that of faith. The multitude may throng and press; but heart to heart, soul to soul, mind to mind, only *so* do we come in actual contact with God. And remembering this, it is a matter not of probability but of certainty, that the soul of Jairus was actually made more capable of a blessing than before—that he must have walked with a more hopeful step—that he must have heard the announcement, "Thy daughter is dead," with less dismay—that the words, "Fear not, only believe," must have come to him with deeper meaning, and been received with more implicit trust than if Jesus had not paused to heal the woman, but hurried on.

And this is the principle of the spiritual kingdom. In matters worldly, the more occupations, duties, a man has, the more certain is he of doing all imperfectly. In the things of God this is reversed. The more duties you perform, the more you are fitted for doing others: what you lose in time, you gain in strength. You do not love God the less, but the more, for loving man. You do not weaken your affection for your family by cultivating attachments beyond its pale, but deepen and intensify it. Respect for the alien, tenderness for the heretic, do not interfere with, but rather strengthen, attachment to your own country and your own church. He who is most liberal in the case of a foreign famine or a distant mission, will be found to have only learned more liberal love towards the poor and the unspiritualized of his own land: so false is the querulous complaint that money is drained away by such calls, to the disadvantage of more near and juster claims.

You do not injure one cause of mercy by turning aside to listen to the call of another.

I. The uses of adversity.
II. The principles of a miracle.

I. The simplest and most obvious use of sorrow is to remind of God. Jairus and the woman, like many others, came to Christ from a sense of want. It would seem that a certain shock is needed to bring us in contact with reality. We are not conscious of our breathing till obstruction makes it felt. We are not aware of the possession of a heart till some disease, some sudden joy or sorrow, rouses it into extraordinary action. And we are not conscious of the mighty cravings of our half Divine humanity; we are not aware of the God within us, till some chasm yawns which must be filled, or till the rending asunder of our affections forces us to become fearfully conscious of a need.

And this, too, is the reply to a rebellious question which our hearts are putting perpetually: Why am I treated so? Why is my health or my child taken from me? What have I done to deserve this? So Job passionately complained that God had set him up as a mark to empty His quiver on.

The reply is, that gifts are granted to elicit our affections; they are resumed to elicit them still more; for we never know the value of a blessing till it is gone. Health, children —we must lose them before we know the love which they contain.

However, we are not prepared to say that a charge might not with some plausibility be brought against the love of God, were no intimation ever given that God means to resume His blessings. That man may fairly complain of his adopted father who has been educated as his own son, and after contracting habits of extravagance, looking forward to a certain line of life, cultivating certain tastes, is informed that he is only adopted: that he must part with these temporary advantages, and sink into a lower sphere. It would be a poor excuse to say that all he had before was so much gain, and unmerited. It is enough to reply that false hopes were raised, and knowingly.

Nay, the laws of countries sanction this. After a certain period, a title to property can not be interfered with: if a right of way or road has existed, in the venerable language of the law, after a custom "whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," no private right, however dignified, can overthrow the public claim. I do not say that a bitter feeling might not have some show of justice if such were the case with God's blessings.

But the truth is this: God confers His gifts with distinct reminders that they are His. He gives us, for a season, spirits taken out of His universe; brings them into temporary contact with us; and we call them father, mother, sister, child, friend. But just as in some places, on one day in the year the way or path is closed in order to remind the public that they pass by sufferance and not by right, in order that no lapse of time may establish "adverse possession," so does God give warning to us. Every ache and pain — every wrinkle you see stamping itself on a parent's brow—every accident which reveals the uncertain tenure of life and possessions — every funeral-bell that tolls, are only God's reminders that we are tenants at will and not by right: pensioners on the bounty of an hour. He is closing up the right of way, warning fairly that what we have is lent, not given: His, not ours. His mercies are so much gain. The resumption of them is no injustice. Job learned that, too, by heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Again—observe the misuse of sorrow. When Jesus came to the house, He found the minstrels and people making a noise. In the East, not content with natural grief, they use artificial means to deepen and prolong it. Men and women make it a separate profession to act as mourners, to exhibit for hire the customary symbols and wail of grief, partly to soothe and partly to rivet sorrow deeply, by the expression of it.

The South and North differ greatly from each other in this respect. The nations of the North restrain their grief—affect the tearless eyes and the stern look. The expressive South, and all the nations whose origin is from thence, are demonstrative in grief. They beat their breasts, tear their hair, throw dust upon their heads. It would be unwise were either to blame or ridicule the other so long as each is true to Nature. Unwise for the nations of the South to deny the reality of the grief which is repressed and silent; unjust in the denizen of the North were he to scorn the violence of Southern grief, or call its uncontrollable demonstrations unmanly. Much must be allowed for temperament.

These two opposite tendencies, however, indicate the two extremes into which men may fall in this matter of sorrow. There are two ways in which we may defeat the purposes of God in grief—by forgetting it, or by over-indulging it.

The world's way is to forget. It prescribes gayety as the remedy for woe; banishes all objects which recall the past; makes it the etiquette of feeling, even amongst near relations, to abstain from the mention of the names of the lost; gets rid of the mourning weeds as soon as possible—the worst of all remedies for grief. Sorrow, the discipline of the Cross, is the school for all that is highest in us. Self-knowledge, true power, all that dignifies humanity, are precluded the moment you try to merely banish grief. It is a touching truth that the Saviour refused the anodyne on the cross that would have deadened pain. He would not steep his senses in oblivion. He would not suffer one drop to trickle down the side of His Father's cup of anguish untasted.

The other way is to nurse sorrow: nay, even our best affections may tempt us to this. It seems treason to those we have loved to be happy now. We sit beneath the cypress; we school ourselves to gloom. Romance magnifies the fidelity of the broken heart: we refuse to be comforted.

Now, generally speaking, all this must be done by effort. For God has so constituted both our hearts and the world, that it is hard to prolong grief beyond a time. Say what we will, the heart has in it a surprising, nay, a startling elasticity. It can not sustain unalterable melancholy; and beside our very pathway plants grow, healing and full of balm. It is a sullen heart that can withstand the slow but sure influences of the morning sun, the summer sky, the trees and flowers, and the soothing power of human sympathy.

We are meant to sorrow, "but not as those without hope." The rule seems to consist in being simply natural. The great thing which Christ did was to call men back to simplicity and nature—not to perverted, but original nature. He counted it no derogation of His manhood to be seen to weep; he thought it no shame to mingle with merry crowds;

He opened His heart wide to all the genial and all the mournful impressions of this manifold life of ours. And this is what we have to do; be natural. Let God, that is, let the influences of God, freely play unthwarted upon the soul. Let there be no unnatural repression, no control of feeling by mere effort. Let there be no artificial and prolonged grief, no "minstrels making a noise." Let great Nature have her way; or, rather, feel that you are in a Father's world, and live in it with Him, frankly, in a free, fearless, childlike, and natural spirit. Then grief will do its work healthily. The heart will bleed, and stanch when it has bled enough. Do not stop the bleeding; but, also, do not open the wound afresh.

II. We come to the principles on which a miracle rests.

1. I observe that the perception of it was confined to a few. Peter, James, John, and the parents of the child were the only persons present. The rest were excluded. To behold wonders, certain inward qualifications, a certain state of heart, a certain susceptibility are required. Those who were shut out were rendered incapable by disqualifications. Absence of spiritual susceptibility in the case of those who "laughed Him to scorn"—unbelief, in those who came with courteous skepticism, saying, "Trouble not the Master;" in other words, He is not master of impossibilities—unreality in the professional mourners—the most helpless of all disqualifications. Their whole life was acting: they had caught the tone of condolence and sympathy as a trick. Before minds such as these the wonders of creation may be spread in vain. Grief and joy alike are powerless to break through the crust of artificial semblance which envelops them. Such beings see no miracles. They gaze on all with dead, dim eyes—wrapped in conventionalisms, their life a drama in which they are but actors, modulating their tones and simulating feelings according to a received standard. How can such be ever witnesses of the supernatural, or enter into the presence of the wonderful?

Two classes alone were admitted. They who, like Peter, James, and John, lived the life of courage, moral purity, and love, and they who, like the parents, had had the film removed from their eyes by grief. For there is a way which God has of forcing the spiritual upon men's attention. When you shut down the lid upon the coffin of a child, or one as dearly loved, there is an awful want, a horrible sense of insecurity, which sweeps away the glittering mist of time from the edge of the abyss, and you gaze on the phantom wonders of the unseen. Yes, real anguish qualifies for an entrance into the solemn chamber where all is miracle.

In another way, and for another reason, the numbers of those who witness a miracle must be limited. Jairus had his daughter restored to life: the woman was miraculously healed. But if every anxious parent and every sick sufferer could have the wonder repeated in his or her case, the wonder itself would cease. This is the preposterousness of the skeptic's demand—Let *me* see a miracle, on an appointed day and hour, and I will believe. Let us examine this.

A miracle is commonly defined to be a contravention of the laws of nature. More properly speaking, it is only a higher operation of those same laws in a form hitherto unseen. A miracle is perhaps no more a suspension or contradiction of the laws of nature than a hurricane or a thunderstorm. They who first travelled to tropical latitudes came back with anecdotes of supernatural convulsions of the elements. In truth, it was only that they had never personally witnessed such effects; but the hurricane which swept the waves flat, and the lightning which illuminated all the heaven, or played upon the bayonets or masts in lambent flames, were but effects of the very same laws of electricity and meteorology which were in operation at home.

A miracle is perhaps no more in contravention of the laws of the universe, than the direct interposition of a whole nation in cases of emergency to uphold what is right in opposition to what is established, is an opposition to the laws of the realm. For instance, the whole people of Israel reversed the unjust decree of Saul which had sentenced Jonathan to death. But law is the expression only of a people's will. Ordinarily we see that expression mediately made through judges, office-bearers, kings: and so long as we see it in this mediate form, we are by habit satisfied that all is legal. There are cases, however, in which, not an indirect, but a direct expression of a nation's will is demanded. Extraordinary cases: and because extraordinary, they who can only see what is legal in what is customary, conventional, and in the routine of written precedents, get bewildered, and reckon the anomalous act illegal or rebellious. In reality, it is only the source of earthly law, the nation, pronouncing the law without the intervention of the subordinate agents.

This will help us to understand the nature of a miracle. What we call laws are simply the subordinate expressions of a will. There must be a will before there can be a law. Certain antecedents are followed by certain consequents. When we see this succession, we are satisfied, and call it natural. But there are emergencies in which it may be necessary for the will to assert itself, and become not the mediate, but the immediate antecedent to the consequent. No subordinate agent interposes; simply the first cause comes in contact with a result. The audible expression of will is followed immediately by something which is generally preceded by some lower antecedent which we call a cause. In this case, you will observe, there has been no contravention of the laws of nature, there has only been an immediate connection between the first cause and the last result. A miracle is the manifestation to man of the voluntariness of power.

Now, bearing this in mind, let it be supposed that every one had a right to demand a miracle—that the occurrence of miracles was unlimited—that as often as you had an ache, or trembled for the loss of a relation, you had but to pray, and receive your wish.

Clearly in this case, first of all, the constitution of the universe would be reversed. The will of man would be substituted for the will of God. Caprice and chance would regulate all: God would be dethroned; God would be degraded to the rank of one of those beings of supernatural power with whom Eastern romance abounds, who are subordinated by a spell to the will of a mortal, who is armed with their powers and uses them as vassals; God would be merely the genius who would be chained by the spell of prayer to obey the behests of man. Man would arm himself with the powers of Deity, and God would be his slave.

Further still: This unlimited extension of miracles would annihilate miracles themselves. For suppose that miracles were universal—that prayer was directly followed by a reply—that we could all heal the sick and raise the dead—this then would become the common order of things. It would be what we now call nature. It would cease to be extraordinary, and the infidel would be as unsatisfied as ever. He would see only the antecedent, prayer, and the invariable consequent, a reply to prayer; exactly what he sees now in the process of causation. And then, just as now, he would say, What more do you want? These are the laws of the universe: Why interpose the complex and cumbrous machinery of a God, the awkward hypothesis of a will, to account for laws?

Miracles, then, are necessarily limited. The non-limitation of miracles would annihilate the miraculous.

Lastly; it is the intention of a miracle to manifest the Divine in the common and ordinary.

For instance, in a boat on the Sea of Tiberias the Redeemer rose and rebuked the storm. Was that miracle merely a proof of His divine mission? Are we merely to gather from it that then and there on a certain day, in a certain obscure corner of the world, Divine power was at work? It is conceivable that a man might credit that miracle—that he might be exceedingly indignant with the rationalist who resolves it into a natural phenomenon—and it is conceivable that that very man might tremble in a storm. To what purpose is that miracle announced to him? He believes in God existing in the past, but not in the present; he believes in a Divine presence in the supernatural, but discredits it in the natural; he recognizes God in the marvellous, but does not feel Him in the wonderful of every day: but unless it has taught him that the waves and winds *now* are in the hollow of the hand of God, the miracle has lost its meaning.

Here again, as in many other cases, Christ healed sickness and raised the dead to life. Are we merely to insert this among the "Evidences of Christianity," and then, with lawyer-like sagacity, having laid down the rules of evidence, say to the infidel, "Behold our credentials; we call upon you to believe our Christianity?" This were a poor reason to account for the putting forth of Almighty Power. More truly and more deeply, these miracles were vivid manifestations to the senses that Christ is the Saviour of the body—that now, as then, the issues of life and death are in His hands—that our daily existence is a perpetual miracle. The extraordinary was simply a manifestation of God's power in the ordinary. Nay, the ordinary marvels are greater than the extraordinary, for these are subordinate to them; merely indications and handmaids guiding us to perceive and recognize a constant Presence, and reminding us that in everyday existence the miraculous and the Godlike rule us.

III.

BAPTISM.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. iii. 26–29.

Wherever opposite views are held with warmth by religious-minded men, we may take for granted that there is some higher truth which embraces both. All high truth is the union of two contradictories. Thus predestination and free-will are opposites: and the truth does not lie between these two, but in a higher reconciling truth which leaves both true. So with the opposing views of baptism. Men of equal spirituality are ready to sacrifice all to assert, or to deny, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. And the truth, I believe, will be found, not in some middle, moderate, timid doctrine which skillfully avoids extremes, but in a truth larger than either of these opposite views, which is the basis of both, and which really is *that* for which each party tenaciously clings to its own view as to a matter of life and death.

The present occasion* only requires us to examine three views.

I. That of Rome.
II. That of modern Calvinism.
III. That of (as I believe) Scripture and the Church of England.

I. The doctrine of Rome respecting baptism. We will take her own authorities.

1. "If any one say that the sin of Adam . . . . is taken away, either by the powers of human nature or by any other remedy than the merit of the One Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, ... or denies that the merit of Jesus Christ, duly conferred by the sacrament of baptism in the church form, is applied to adults as well as to children—let him be accursed." —Sess. v. 4.

"If any one deny that the imputation of original sin is remitted by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper character of sin, is not taken away, but only not imputed—let him be accursed."—Sess. v. 5.

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* The recent decision on the Gorham case of the Privy Council.

"If any one say that grace is not given by sacraments of this kind always and to all, so far as God's part is concerned, but only at times, and to some, although they be duly received—let him be accursed."

"If any one say that by the sacraments of the New Covenant themselves, grace is not conferred by the efficacy of the rite (opus operatum), but that faith alone is sufficient for obtaining grace—let him be accursed."

"If any one say that in three sacraments, *i. e.*, baptism, confirmation, and orders, a character is not impressed upon the soul, *i. e.*, a certain spiritual and indelible mark (for which reason they can not be repeated)—let him be accursed."—Sess. vii. cap. 7–9.

"By baptism, putting on Christ, we are made a new creation in Him, obtaining plenary and entire remission of all sins."

It is scarcely possible to misrepresent the doctrine so plainly propounded. Christ's merits are instrumentally applied by baptism; original sin is removed by a change of nature; a new character is imparted to the soul; a germinal principle or seed of life is miraculously given; and all this in virtue not of any condition in the recipient, nor of any condition at all except that of the due performance of the rite.

This view is held, with varieties and modifications of many kinds, by an increasingly large number of the members of the Church of England; but we do not concern ourselves with these timid modifications, which painfully attempt to draw some subtle hair's-breadth distinction between themselves and the above doctrine. The true, honest, and only honest representation of this view is that put forward undisguisedly by Rome.

When it is objected to the Romanist that there is no evidence in the life of the baptized child different from that given by the unbaptized sufficient to make credible a change so enormous, he replies, as in the case of the other sacrament, The miracle is invisible. You can not see the bread and wine become flesh and blood; but the flesh and blood are there, whether you see them or not. You can not see the effects of regeneration, but they are there, hidden, whether visible to you or not. In other words, Christ has declared that it is with every one born of the Spirit as with the wind, "*Thou* *hearest the sound thereof.*" But the Romanist distinctly holds that you *can not* hear the sound—that the wind hath blown, but there is no sound—that the Spirit hath descended, and there are no fruits whereby the tree is known.

In examining this view, at the outset we deprecate those vituperative and ferocious expressions which are used so commonly against the Church of Rome—unbecoming in private conversation, disgraceful on the platform, they are still more unpardonable in the pulpit. I am not advocating that feeble softness of mind which can not speak strongly because it can not feel strongly. I know the value, and in their place, the need of strong words. I know that the Redeemer used them: stronger and keener never fell from the lips of man. I am aware that our Reformers used coarse and vehement language; but we do not imbibe the Reformers' spirit by the mere adoption of the Reformers' language; nay, paradoxical as it may seem, the use of their language even proves a degeneracy from their spirit. You will find harsh and gross expressions enough in the Homilies, but remember that when they spoke thus, Rome was in the ascendency. She had the power of fire and sword; and the men who spoke so were candidates for martyrdom, by the expressions that they used. Every one might be called upon by fire and steel to prove the quality of what was in him, and account for the high pretension of his words. I grant the grossness. But when they spoke of the harlotries of Rome, and spoke of her adulteries, and fornications, and lies which she had put in full cup to the lip of nations, it was the sublime defiance of free-hearted men against oppression in high places, and falsehood dominant. But now, when Rome is no longer dominant, and the only persecutions that we hear of are the petty persecutions of Protestants among themselves, to use language such as this is not the spirit of a daring Reformer, but only the pusillanimous shriek of a cruel cowardice which keeps down the enemy whose rising it is afraid of.

We will do justice to this doctrine of Rome. It has this merit at least, that it recognizes the character of a church: it admits it to be a society, and not an association. An association is an arbitrary union. Men form associations for temporary reasons; and, arbitrarily made, they can be arbitrarily dissolved. Society, on the contrary, is made, not by will, but facts. Brotherhood, sonship, families, nations are nature's work: real facts. Rome acknowledges this. It permits no arbitrary drawing of the lines of that which calls itself the Church. A large, broad, mighty field: the Christian world: all baptized: nay, expressly, even those who are baptized by heretics. It shares the spirit, instead of monopolizing it.

Practically, therefore, in the matter of education, we should teach children on the basis on which Rome works. We say as Rome says, You are the child of God: baptism declares you such. Rome says as Paul says, "As many of you as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Consequently, we distinguish between this doctrine as held by spiritual and as held by unspiritual men. Spirituality often neutralizes error in views. Men are often better than their creeds. The Calvinist ought to be an Antinomian—he is not. So, in holy-minded men, this doctrine of baptismal regeneration loses its perniciousness—nay, even becomes, in erroneous form, a precious, blessed truth.

It is quite another thing, however, held by unspiritual men. Our objections to this doctrine are,

1. Because it assumes baptism to be not the testimony to a fact, but the fact itself. Baptism *proclaims* the child of God. The Romanist says it *creates* him. Then and there a mysterious change takes place, inward, spiritual, effected by an external rite. This makes baptism not a sacrament, but an event.

2. Because it is materialism of the grossest kind. The order of Christian life is from within to that which is without—from the spiritual truth to the material expression of it. The Roman order is from the outward to the creation of the inward. This is magic. The Jewish Cabalists believed that the pronunciation of certain magical words engraved on the seal of Solomon would perform marvels. The whole Eastern world fancied that such spells could transform one being into another—a brute into a man, or a man into a brute. Books containing such trash were burnt at Ephesus in the dawn of Christianity. But here, in the midday of Christianity, we have belief in such spells, given, it is true that it is said, by God, whereby the demoniacal nature can be exorcised, the Divine implanted in its stead, and the evil heart transformed unconsciously into a pure spirit.

Now this is degrading God. Observe the results: A child is to be baptized on a given day; but when that day arrives the child is unwell, and the ceremony must be postponed another week or month. Again a delay takes place—the day is damp or cold. At last the time arrives; the service is read; it may require, if read slowly, five minutes more than ordinarily. Then and there, when that reading is slowly accomplished, the mystery is achieved. And all this time, while the child is ill, while the weather is bad, while the reader procrastinates—I say it solemnly—the Eternal Spirit who rules this universe must wait patiently, and come down, obedient to a mortal's spell, at the very second that it suits his convenience. God must wait attendance on the caprice of a careless parent, ten thousand accidents, nay, the leisure of an indolent or an immoral priest. Will you dare insult the Majesty on high by such a mockery as this result?

3. We object, because this view makes Christian life a struggle for something that is lost, instead of a progress to something that lies before. Let no one fancy that Rome's doctrine on this matter makes salvation an easy thing. The Spirit of God is given—the germ is implanted; but it may be crushed, injured, destroyed. And her doctrine is, that venial sins after baptism are removed by absolutions and attendance on the ordinances: whereas for mortal sins there is —not no hope—but no certainty ever after until the judgment-day. Vicious men may make light of such teaching, and get periodic peace, from absolution, to go and sin again; but to a spiritual Romanist this doctrine is no encouragement for laxity. Now observe, after sin life becomes the effort to get back to where you were years ago. It is the sad longing glance at the Eden from which you have been expelled, which is guarded now by a fiery sword in this world forever. And, therefore, whoever is familiar with the writings of some of the earliest leaders of the present movement Romeward, writings that rank among the most touching and beautiful of English compositions, will remember the marked tone of sadness which pervades them—their high, sad longings after the baptismal purity that is gone—their mournful contemplations of a soul that once glistened with baptismal dew, now "seamed and scarred" with the indelible marks of sin.

The true Christian life is ever onward, full of trust and hope: a life wherein even past sin is no bar to saintliness, but the step by which you ascend to higher vantage-ground of holiness. The "indelible grace of baptism," how can it teach that?

II. The second view is that held by what we, for the sake of avoiding personalities, call modern Calvinism. It draws a distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. It holds that baptism admits all into the former, but into the latter only a special few. Baptismal regeneration as applied to the first, is merely a change of state — though what is meant by a *change of state* it were hard to say, or to determine wherein an unbaptized person admitted to all the ordinances would differ in *state* from a person baptized. The real benefit of baptism, however, only belongs to the elect. With respect to others, to predicate of them regeneration in the highest sense, is at best an ecclesiastical fiction, said "in the judgment of charity."

This view maintains that you are not God's child until you become such *consciously.* Not until evidence of a regenerate life is given — not until signs of a converted soul are shown, is it right to speak of being God's child, except in this judgment of charity. Now we remark,

1. This judgment of charity ends at the baptismal font. It is never heard of in after-life. It is like the charitable judgment of the English law, which presumes, or is said to presume, a man innocent till proved guilty: valuable enough as a legal fiction; nevertheless, it does not prevent a man barring his windows, guarding his purse, keenly watching against the dealings of those around him who are presumed innocent. Similarly, the so-called "judgment of charity" terminates with infancy. They who speak of the Church's language, in which children are called children of God, as being quite right, but only in "the judgment of charity," are exactly the persons who do not in after-life charitably presume that all their neighbors are Christians. "He is not a Christian." "She is one of the world," or "one of the unregenerate." Such is the language applied to those who are in baptism reckoned children of God. They *could* not consistently apply to all adults the language applied in this text: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

2. Next, I observe that this view is identical with the Roman one in this respect, that it *creates* the fact instead of testifying to it. Only, instead of baptism, it substitutes certain views, feelings, and impressions, and asserts that these *make* the man into a child of God. The Romanist says baptism, the Calvinist says faith, makes *that* true which was *not* true before. It is not a fact that God is that person's Father till in the one case baptism, in the other faith, have made him such.

3. Observe the pernicious results of this teaching in the matter of education. Here, again, I draw the distinction between the practical consequences which legitimately ought to be, and those which actually are deduced from it. Happily men are better than their views. Hear the man speaking out of his theological system, and then hear him speak-

ing out of the abundance of his heart. Hear the religious mother when the system is in view, and all are indiscriminately, except a certain few, corrupt, vile, with nothing good in them, heirs of ruin. But hear her talk unguardedly of her own children. They have the frailties, weaknesses, common faults of childhood; but they have no vice in them: there is nothing base or degraded in her children! When the embraces of her child are round her neck, it will require more eloquence than you possess to convince her that she is nursing a little demon in her lap. The heart of the mother is more than a match for the creed of the Calvinist.

There are some, however, who do not shrink from consistency, and develop their doctrine in all its consequences. The children follow out their instructions with fearful fidelity. Taught that they are not the children of God till certain feelings have been developed in them, they become by degrees bewildered, or else lose their footing on reality. They hear of certain mystic joys and sorrows; and unless they fictitiously adopt the language they hear, they are painfully conscious that they know nothing of them as yet. They hear of a depression for sin which they certainly have never experienced — a joy in God, making His service and His house the gate of heaven; and they know that it is excessively irksome to them — a confidence, trust, and assurance of which they know nothing — till they take for granted what has been told them, that they are *not* God's children. Taught that they are as yet of the world, they live as the world; they carry out their education, which has dealt with them as children of the devil, to be converted; and children of the devil they become.

Of these two views, the last is by far the most certain to undermine Christianity in every Protestant country. The first at least assumes God's badge to be an universal one, and in education is so far right, practically: only wrong in the decision of the question how the child was created a child of God. But the second assumes a false, partial, party badge—election, views, feelings. No wonder that the children of such religionists proverbially turn out ill.

III. We pass to the doctrine of the Bible and (I believe) of the Church of England.

Christ came to reveal a name—the Father. He abolished the exclusive "my," and He taught us to pray, "our Father." He proclaimed God the Father—man the Son: revealed that the Son of Man is also the Son of God. Man, as man, God's child. He came to redeem the world from that ignorance of the relationship which had left them in heart aliens and foreigners. Human nature, therefore, became, viewed in Christ, a holy thing and divine. The revelation is a common humanity, sanctified in God. The appearance of the Son of God is the sanctification of the human race.

The development of this proved much. Sons of God! Yes; ye Jews have monopolized it too long. Is that Samaritan, heretic and alien, a child of God? Yes. The Samaritan, but not those outcasts of society? Yes, those outcasts of society. He went into the publican's house and proclaimed that "he too was a son of Abraham." He suffered the sinful penitent to bathe His feet with tears. He saw there the Eternal Light reflected—the eye, long dimmed and darkened, which yet still could read the Eternal Mind. She, too, is God's erring, but forgiven, beloved, and "much-loving" child. One step further. He will not dare to say—the heathen!—the Gentiles who bow down to stocks and stones? Yes, the Gentiles too. He spoke to them a parable. He told of a younger son who had lived long away from his father's home. But the forgetfulness of his father could not abrogate the fact of his being his son, and as soon as he recognized the relationship, all the blessings of it were his own.

Now this is the revelation. Man is God's child, and the sin of the man consists in perpetually living as if it were false. It is the sin of the heathen; and what is your mission to him but to tell him that he is God's child, and not living up to his privileges? It is the sin of the baptized Christian—waiting for feelings for a claim on God. It was the false life which the Jews had led, precisely this, that they were living enslaved by law. Christ had come to redeem them from the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. But they were sons already, if they only knew it. "*Because* ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father." To be a son of God is one thing; to know that you are, and call Him Father, is another—and that is regeneration.

Now there was wanted a permanent and authoritative pledge, revealing and confirming this; for, to mankind in the mass, invisible truths become real only when they have been made visible. All spiritual facts must have an existence in form for the human mind to rest on. This pledge is baptism. Baptism is a visible witness to the world of that which the world is forever forgetting. A common humanity united in God. Baptism authoritatively reveals and pledges to the individual that which is true of the race. Baptism takes the child and addresses it by name: Paul—no longer

Saul—you are a child of God. Remember it henceforth. It is now revealed to you, and recognized by you; and to recognize God as the Father is to be regenerate. *You*, Paul, are now regenerate; you will have foes to fight—the world, the flesh, and the devil: but remember, they only keep you out of an inheritance which is your own—not an inheritance which you have to win by some new feeling or merit in yourself. It *is* yours; you *are* the child of God—you *are* a member of Christ—you *are* an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Observe then—baptism does not *create* a child of God. It authoritatively declares him so. It does not make the fact, it only reveals it. If baptism made it a fact then and there for the first time, baptism would be magic. Nay, faith does not create a child of God any more than baptism, nor does it make a fact. It only appropriates that which is a fact already. For otherwise see what inextricable confusion you fall into. You ask a man to believe, and thereby be created a child of God. Believe what—that God is his Father? But God is not his Father. He is *not* a child of God, you say, till he believes. Then you ask him to believe a lie.

Herein lies the error, in basis identical, of the Romanist and the Calvinist. Faith is to one what baptism is to the other, the creator of a fact; whereas they both *rest* upon a fact, which is a fact whether they exist or not—before they exist; nay, without whose previous existence both of them are unmeaning and false.

The Catechism, however, says: In baptism . . . . I was *made* a child of God. Yes, coronation makes a sovereign; but, paradoxical as it may seem, it can only *make* one a sovereign who is a sovereign already. Crown a pretender, that coronation will not create the king. Coronation is the authoritative act of the nation *declaring* a fact which was fact before. And ever after coronation is the event to which all dates back, and the crown is the expression used for all royal acts: the crown pardons, the prerogatives of the crown, etc.

Similarly with baptism. Baptism makes a child of God in the sense in which coronation makes a king. And baptism naturally stands in Scripture for the title of regeneration and the moment of it. Only what coronation is in an earthly way, an authoritative manifestation of an invisible earthly truth, baptism is in a heavenly way: God's authoritative declaration in material form of a spiritual reality. In other words, no bare sign, but a Divine sacrament.

Now for the blessings of this view.

1. It prevents exclusiveness and spiritual pride, and all condemnation and contempt of others; for it admits those who have no spiritual capacity or consciousness to be God's children. It proclaims a kingdom, not for a few favorites, but for mankind. It protests against the idea that sonship depends on feelings. It asserts it as a broad, grand, universal, blessed fact. It bids you pray with a meaning of added majesty in the words, *Our* Father.

Take care. Do not say of others that they are unregenerate, of the world. Do not make a distinction within the Church of Christians and not-Christians. If you do, what do you more than the Pharisees of old? That wretched beggar that holds his hat at the crossing of the street is God's child as well as you, if he only knew it. You know it—he does not: that is the difference. But the immortal is in him too, and the Eternal Word speaks in him. That daughter of dissipation whom you despise, spending night after night in frivolity, she too has a Father in heaven. "My Father and *your* Father, my God and *your* God." She has forgotten Him, and, like the prodigal, is trying to live on the husks of the world—the empty husks which will not satisfy—the degrading husks which the swine did eat. But whether she will or not, her baptism is valid, and proclaims a fact—which may be, alas! the worse for her, if she will not have it the better.

2. This doctrine protests against the notion of our being separate units in the Divine life. The Church of Calvinism is merely a collection of atoms, a sand-heap piled together, with no cohesion among themselves, or a mass of steel filings cleaving separately to a magnet, but not to each other. Baptism proclaims a church. Humanity joined in Christ to God. Do not say that the separating work of baptism, drawing a distinction between the Church and the world, negatives this. Do not say, that because the Church is separated from the world, therefore the world are not God's children. Rather that very separation proves it. You baptize a separate body, in order to realize that which is true of the collective race, as in this text, "There is neither Jew nor Greek." In all things it is the same. If you would sanctify all time, you set apart a sabbath—not to show that other days are not intended to be sacred, but for the very purpose of making them sacred. If you would have a "nation of priests," you set apart a priesthood; not as if the priestly functions of instruction and assisting to approach God were exclusively in that body, but in order, by concentration, to bring out to greater perfection the priestly character which

is shared by the whole, and then thereby make the whole more truly "priests to God to offer spiritual sacrifices." In the same way, if God would baptize humanity, He baptizes a separate Church, in order that that Church may baptize the race. The Church is God's ideal of humanity realized.

Lastly, This doctrine of baptism sanctifies materialism. The Romanist was feeling his way to a great fact when he said that there are other things of sacramental efficacy besides these two—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. The things of earth are pledges and sacraments of things in heaven. It is not for nothing that God has selected for His sacraments the commonest of all acts—a meal, and the most abundant of all materials — water. Think you that He means to say that only through two channels His Spirit streams into the soul? Or is it not much more in unison with His dealings to say that these two are set apart to signify to us the sacramental character of all nature? Just as a miracle was intended not to reveal God working there, at *that* death-bed and in *that* storm, but to call attention to His presence in *every* death and *every* storm. Go out at this spring season of the year; see the mighty preparations for life that Nature is making; feel the swelling sense of gratefulness, and the pervasive expanding consciousness of love for all Being; and then say, whether this whole form which we call nature is not the great Sacrament of God, the revelation of His existence, and the channel of His communications to the spirit?

IV.

BAPTISM.

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us."—1 Peter iii. 21.

Last Sunday we considered the subject of baptism in reference to the Romish and modern Calvinistic views. The truth seemed to lie not in a middle course between the two extremes, but in a truth deeper than either of them. For there are various modifications of the Romish view which soften down its repulsive features. There are some who hold that the guilt of original sin is pardoned, but the tendencies of an evil nature remain; others who attribute a milder meaning to "regeneration," understanding by it a change of state instead of a change of nature; others who acknowledge a certain mysterious benefit imparted by baptism, but decline determining how much grace is given, or what the exact nature of the blessing is; others who acknowledge that it is in certain cases the moment when regeneration takes place, but hold that it is conditional, occurring sometimes, not always, and following upon the condition of what they call "prevenient grace." We do not touch upon these views. They are simply modifications of the Romish view, and as such, more offensive than the view itself; for they contain that which is most objectionable in it, and special evils of their own besides.

We admitted the merits of the two views. We are grateful to the Romanist for the testimony which he bears to the truth of the extent of Christ's salvation—for the privilege which he gives of calling all the baptized, children of God—for the protest which his doctrine makes against all party monopoly of God—for the protest against ultra-spiritualism, in acknowledging that material things are the types and channels of the Almighty Presence.

We are grateful to the Calvinist for his strong protest against formalism—for his assertion of the necessity of an inward change—for the distinction which he has drawn between being in the *state* of sons, and having the *nature* of sons of God.

The error in these two systems, contrary as they are, appeared to us to be identically one and the same—that of pretending to create a fact instead of witnessing to it. The Calvinist maintains that on a certain day and hour, under the ministry of the Word, under the preaching of some one who "proclaims the Gospel," he was born again, and God became his Father; and the Romanist declares that on a certain day, at a certain moment by an earthly clock, by the hands of a priest apostolically ordained, the evil nature was expelled from him, and a new fact in the world was created—he attained the right of calling God his Father.

Now if baptism makes God our Father, baptism is incantation; if faith makes him so, faith rests upon a falsehood.

For the Romanist does no more than the red Indian and the black negro pretend to do—exorcise the devil, and infuse God. The only question then becomes, Which is the true enchanter, and which is the impostor? for the juggler does, by the power of imagination, often cure the sick man; but the mysterious effects of baptism never are visible, and never can be tested in this world.

On the other hand, faith would rest upon a falsehood: for if faith is to give the right of calling God a Father, how can you believe that which is not true the very moment before belief? God is not your Father. If you believe He is, your belief is false.

The truth which underlies these two views, on which all that is true in them rests, and in which all that is false is absorbed, is the paternity of God. This is the revelation of the Redeemer. This is authoritatively declared by baptism, appropriated personally by faith, but a truth independent both of baptism and faith—which would still be true if there were neither a baptism nor a faith in the world. They are the *witnesses* of the fact—not the creators of it.

Here, however, two difficulties arise. If this be so, do we not make light of Original Sin? And do we not reduce baptism into a superfluous ceremony?

Before we enter upon these questions, I must vindicate myself from the appearance of presumption. Where the wisest and holiest have held opposite views, it seems immodest to speak with unfaltering certainty and decisive tone. Hesitation, guarded statements, caution, it would seem, would be far more in place. Now, to speak decidedly, is not, necessarily, to speak presumptuously. There are questions involving great research, and questions relating to truths beyond our ken, where guarded and uncertain tones are only a duty. There are others where the decision has become conviction, a kind of intuition, the result of years of thought, which has been the day to a man's darkness, "the fountain-light of all his seeing," which has interpreted him to himself, made all clear where all was perplexed before, been the key to the riddle of truths that seemed contradictory, become part of his very being, and for which more than once he has held himself cheerfully prepared to sacrifice all that is commonly held dear. With respect to convictions such as these, of course, the arguments by which they are enforced may be faulty, the illustrations inadequate, the power of making them intelligible very feeble; nay, the views themselves may be wrong; but to pretend to speak with hesitation and uncertainty respecting such convictions would be not modesty, but affectation.

For let us remember in what spirit we are to enter on this inquiry. Not in the spirit of mere cautious orthodoxy, endeavoring to find a safe mean between two extremes—inquiring what is the view held by the sound, and judicious, and respectable men, who were never found guilty of any enthusiasm, and under the shelter of whose opinion we may be secure from the charge of any thing unsound; nor in the spirit of the lawyer, patiently examining documents, weighing evidence, and deciding whether upon sufficient testimony there is such a thing as "prevenient grace" or not; nor, once more, in the spirit of superstition. The superstitious mother of the lower classes baptizes her child in all haste because she believes it has a mystic influence on its health, or because she fancies that it confers the name without which it would not be summoned at the day of judgment. And the superstitious mother of the upper classes baptizes *her* child too in all haste, because, though she does not precisely know what the mystic effect of baptism is, she thinks it best to be on the safer side, lest her child should die, and its eternity should be decided by the omission. And we go to preach to the heathen while there are men and women in our Christian England so bewildered with systems and sermons, so profoundly in the dark respecting the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so utterly unable to repose in eternal love and justice, that they must guard their child *from* Him by a ceremony, and have the shadow of a shade of doubt whether or not, for omission of theirs, that child's Creator and Father may curse its soul for all eternity!

We are to enter upon this question as a real one of life and death—as men who feel in their bosoms sin and death, and who want to determine no theological nicety, but this: Whether we have a right to claim to be sons of God or not? And if so, on what grounds? In virtue of a ceremony, or in virtue of a certain set of feelings? Or in virtue of an eternal fact—the fact of God's paternity?

I reply to two objections.

I. The apparent denial of original sin.
II. The apparent result that baptism is nothing.

I. The text selected is a strong and distinct one. It proclaims the value of baptism. "Baptism *saves* us." But it declares that it can only be said figuratively: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us."

Now the first reply I make is, that in truth the Romish view seems to make lighter of original sin than this. Methinks original sin must be a trifling thing if a little water and a few human words can do away with it. A trifling thing if, after it is done away, there is no distinguishable difference between the baptized and unbaptized; if the unbaptized Quaker is just as likely to exhibit the fruits of goodness as the baptized son of the Church of England. We have got out of the land of reality into the domain of figments and speculations. A fictitious guilt is done away with by a fictitious pardon, neither the appearance nor the disappearance being visible.

Original sin is an awful fact. It is not the guilt of an ancestor imputed to an innocent descendant, but it is the tendencies of that ancestor living in his offspring and incurring guilt. Original sin can be forgiven only so far as original sin is removed. It is not Adam's, it is yours; and it must cease to be yours, or else what is "taking away original sin?"

Now he who would deny original sin must contradict all experience in the transmission of qualities. The very hound transmits his peculiarities learnt by education, and the Spanish horse his paces, taught by art, to his offspring, as a part of their nature. If it were not so in man, there could be no history of man as a species—no tracing out the tendencies of a race or nation—nothing but the unconnected repetitions of isolated individuals and their lives. It is plain that the first man must have exerted on his race an influence quite peculiar—that his acts must have biased their acts. And this bias or tendency is what we call original sin.

Now original sin is just this denial of God's paternity, refusing to live as His children, and saying we are not His children. To live as His child is the true life—to live as not His child is the false life. What was the Jews' crime? Was it not this: "He came unto His own, and His own received him not:" that they *were* His own, and in act denied it, preferring to the claim of spiritual relationship, the claim of union by circumcision or hereditary descent? What was the crime of the Gentiles? Was it not this: that "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful?" For what were they to be thankful? For being His enemies? Were they not His children, His sheep of another fold? Was not the whole falsehood of their life the worship of demons and nothings instead of Him? Did not the parable represent them as the younger son—a wanderer from home, but still a *son?*

From this state Christ redeemed. He revealed God not as the mechanic of the universe, not the judge, but as the Father, and as the Spirit who is in man, "lighting every man," moving in man his infinite desires and infinite affections. This was the revelation. The reception of that revelation is regeneration. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but to as many as *received* Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." They *were* His own, yet they wanted power to become His own.

Draw a distinction, therefore, between being the child of God and realizing it. The fact is one thing; the feeling of the fact, and the life which results from that feeling, is another. Redemption is the taking of us out of the life of falsehood into the life of truth and fact. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth." But, remember, it is a truth; true whether you believe it or not; true whether you are baptized or not.

There are two ways in which that revelation may be accepted. 1. By a public recognition called baptism. 2. By faith. In two ways, therefore, may it be said that man is saved. "We are saved by faith." But it is also true, figuratively, "Baptism saves us."

II. If baptism is only the public recognition and symbol of a fact, is not baptism degraded and made superfluous?

1. Baptism is given as a something to rest upon; nay, as a something without which redemption would soon become unreal—which converts a doctrine into a reality—which realizes visibly what is invisible.

For our nature is such, that immaterial truths are unreal to us until they are embodied in material form. Form almost gives them reality and being. For instance, time is an eternal fact. But time only exists to our conceptions as an actuality by measurements of materialism. When God created the sun, and moon, and stars, to serve for "signs and for seasons, and for days and years," He was actually, so far as man was concerned, creating time. Our minds would be only floating in an eternal Now, if it were not for symbolical successions which represent the processes of thought. The clock in the house is almost a fresh creation. It realizes. The gliding heavens, and the seasons, and the ticking clock—what is time to us without them? Nothing.

God's character, again, nay, God Himself, *to us* would be nothing if it were not for the creation, which is the great symbol and sacrament of His presence. If there were no light, no sunshine, no sea, no national and domestic life, no material witness of His being, God would be to us as good as lost. The Creation *gives* us God: forever real in Himself, by Creation He becomes a fact to *us*.

It is in virtue, again, of this necessity in man for an outward symbol to realize an invisible idea, that a bit of torn and blackened rag hanging from a fortress or the taffrail of a ship, is a kind of life to iron-hearted men. Why is it that in the heat of battle there is one spot where the sabres flash most rapidly, and the pistols' ring is quicker, and men and officers close in most densely, and all are gathered round one man, round whose body that tattered silk is wound, and held with the tenacity of a death-struggle? Are they only children fighting for a bit of rag? That flag is every thing to them: their regiment, their country, their honor, their life; yet it is *only* a symbol! Are symbols nothing?

In the same way, baptism is a fact for man to rest upon, a doctrine realized to flesh and blood. A something in eternity which has no place in time brought down to such time expressions as "then and there."

2. Again, baptism is the token of a church: the token of an universal church. Observe the importance of its being the sacrament of an universal church instead of the symbol of a sect. Not episcopacy, not justification by faith, nor any party badge, but "one baptism." How blessed, on the strength of this, to be able to say to the baptized dissenter, You are my brother: you anathematize my church—link Popery and Prelacy together — malign me; but the same sign is on our brow, and the same Father was named over our baptism. Or to say to a baptized Romanist, You are my brother too—in doctrinal error perhaps—in error of life it may be too: but my brother—our enemies the same—our struggle the same—our hopes and warfare the very same. Or to the very outcast, And you, my poor degraded friend, are my brother still—sunk, oblivious of your high calling; but still, whatever keeps you away from heaven keeps you from your own. You may live the false life till it is too late: but still, you only exclude yourself from your home. Of course this is very offensive. What! the Romanist my brother! the synagogue of Satan the house of God! the Spirit of God dwelling with the Church of Rome! the believer in transubstantiation my brother, and God's child! Yes, even so; and it is just your forgetfulness of what baptism is and means, that accounts for that indignation of yours. Do you remember what the elder brother in the parable was doing? He went away sulky and gloomy, because one not half so good as himself was recognized as his father's child.

3. Baptism is seen to be no mere superfluity when you remember that it is an authoritative symbol. Draw the distinction between an arbitrary symbol and an authoritative one—for this difference is every thing.

I take once again the illustration of the coronation act. Coronation places the crown on the brow of one who *is* sovereign. It does not make the fact, it witnesses it. Is coronation therefore nothing? An arbitrary symbolical act agreed on by a few friends of the sovereign would be nothing; but an act which is the solemn ratification of a country is every thing. It realizes a fact scarcely till then felt to be real. Yet the fact was fact before—otherwise the coronation would be invalid. Even when the third William was crowned, there was the symbol of a previous fact—the nation's decree that he should be king: and accordingly, ever after, all is dated back to that. You talk of crown-prerogatives. You say in your loyalty you "would bow to the crown, though it hung upon a bush." Yet it is only a symbol! You only say it "in a figure." But that figure contains within it the royalty of England.

In a figure, the Bible speaks of baptism as you speak of coronation, as identical with that which it proclaims. It calls it regeneration. It says baptism saves. A grand figure, because it rests upon eternal fact. Call you that nothing?

We look to the Bible to corroborate this. In the Acts of the Apostles Cornelius is baptized. On what grounds? To manufacture him into a child of God, or because he *was* the child of God? Did his baptism create the fact, or was the fact prior to his baptism, and the ground on which his baptism was valid? The history is this: St. Peter could not believe that a Gentile could be a child of God. But miraculous phenomena manifested to his astonishment that this Gentile actually *was* God's child—whereupon the argument of Peter was very natural. He has the Spirit, therefore baptism is superfluous. Nay, he has the Spirit, therefore give him the *symbol* of the Spirit. Let it be revealed to others what he is. He *is* heir to the inheritance, therefore give him the title-deeds. He *is* of royal lineage—put the crown upon his head. He *is* a child of God—baptize him. "Who shall forbid water, seeing these have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

One illustration more from the marriage ceremony; and I select this for two reasons: because it is the type in Scripture of the union between Christ and his Church, and because the Church of Rome has called it a sacrament.

A deep truth is in that error. Rome calls it a sacrament, because it is the authoritative symbol of an invisible fact. That invisible fact is the agreement of two human beings to be one. We deny it to be a sacrament, because, though it is the symbol of an invisible fact, it is not the symbol of a spiritual fact, nor an eternal fact: no spiritual truth, but only a changeful human covenant.

Now observe the difference between an arbitrary or conventional, and an authoritative ceremony of marriage-union. There are conventional acknowledgments of that agreement, ceremonies peculiar to certain districts, private pledges, betrothals. In the sight of God those are valid; they can not be lightly broken without sin. You can not in the courts of heaven distinguish between an oath to God and a word pledged to man. He said, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." Such an engagement can not be infringed without penalty—the penalty of frivolized hearts, and that habit of changefulness of attachment which is the worst of penalties. But now, additional to that, will any one say that the marriage ceremony is superfluous—that the ring he gives his wife is nothing? It is every thing. It is the authoritative ratification by a country and before God of that which before was for all purposes of earth unreal. Authoritative—therein lies the difference. Just in that authoritativeness lies the question whether the ceremony is nothing or every thing.

And yet remember, the ceremony itself does not pretend to create the fact. It only claims to realize the fact. It admits the fact as existing previously. It bases itself upon a fact. Forasmuch as two persons have consented together, and forasmuch as a token and pledge of that in the shape of a ring has been given, therefore, only therefore, the appointed minister *pronounces* that they are what betrothal had made them already in the sight of God.

Exactly so, the *authoritativeness* is the all in all which converts baptism from a mere ceremony into a sacrament. Baptism is not merely a conventional arrangement, exceedingly convenient, agreed on by men to remind themselves and one another that they are God's children, but valid as a legal, eternal truth, a condensed, embodied fact.

Is this making baptism nothing? I should rather say baptism is every thing. Baptism saves us.

One word now practically. I address myself to any one who is conscious of fault, sin-laden, struggling with the terrible question whether he has a right to claim God as his Father or not, bewildered on the one side by Romanism, on the other by Calvinism. My brother, let not either of these rob you of your privileges. Let not Rome send you to the fearful questioning as to whether the mystic seed infused at a certain moment by an act of man remains in you still, or whether it has been so impaired by sin that henceforth there is nothing but penance, tears, and uncertainty until the grave. Let not Calvinism send you with terrible self-inspection to the more dreadful task of searching your own soul for the warrant of your redemption, and deciding whether you have or have not the feelings and the faith which give you a right to be one of God's elect. Better make up your mind at once you have not; you have no feelings that entitle you to that. Take your stand upon the broader, sublimer basis of God's paternity. God created the world—God redeemed the world. Baptism proclaims separately, personally, by name, to you—God created you, God redeemed you. Baptism is your warrant, you *are* His child. And now, because you are His child, live as a child of God; be redeemed from the life of evil, which is false to your nature, into the life of light and goodness, which is the truth of your being. Scorn all that is mean; hate all that is false; struggle with all that is impure. Love whatsoever "things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," certain that God is on your side, and that whatever keeps you from Him, keeps you from your own Father. Live the simple, lofty life which befits an heir of immortality.

V.

ELIJAH.

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."—1 Kings xix. 4.

It has been observed of the holy men of Scripture that their most signal failures took place in those points of character for which they were remarkable in excellence. Moses was the meekest of men, but it was Moses who "spake unadvisedly with his lips." St. John was the apostle of charity; yet he is the very type to us of religious intolerance, in his desire to call down fire from heaven. St. Peter is proverbially the apostle of impetuous intrepidity, yet twice he proved a craven. If there were any thing for which Elijah is remarkable, we should say it was superiority to human weakness. Like the Baptist, he dared to arraign and rebuke his sovereign: like the commander who cuts down the bridge behind him, leaving himself no alternative but death or victory, he taunted his adversaries the priests of Baal, on Mount Carmel, making them gnash their teeth and cut themselves with knives, but at the same time insuring for himself a terrible end, in case of failure, from his exasperated foes. And again, in his last hour, when he was on his way to a strange and unprecedented departure from this world—when the whirlwind and flame-chariot were ready, he asked for no human companionship. The bravest men are pardoned if one lingering feeling of human weakness clings to them at the last, and they desire a human eye resting on them—a human hand in theirs—a human presence with them. But Elijah would have rejected all. In harmony with the rest of his lonely severe character, he desired to meet his Creator alone. Now it was this man—so stern, so iron, so independent, so above all human weakness—of whom it was recorded that in his trial-hour he gave way to a fit of petulance and querulous despondency to which there is scarcely found a parallel. Religious despondency, therefore, is our subject.

I. The causes of Elijah's despondency.
II. God's treatment of it.

The causes of Elijah's despondency.

1. Relaxation of physical strength.

On the reception of Jezebel's message, Elijah flies for his life—toils on the whole day—sits down under a juniper-tree, faint, hungry, and travel-worn; the gale of an Oriental evening, damp and heavy with languid sweetness, breathing on his face. The prophet and the man give way. He longs to die: you can not mistake the presence of causes in part purely physical.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Of that constitution which in our ignorance we call union of soul and body, we know little respecting what is cause and what is effect. We would fain believe that the mind has power over the body, but it is just as true that the body rules the mind. Causes apparently the most trivial: a heated room—want of exercise—a sunless day—a northern aspect—will make all the difference between happiness and unhappiness, between faith and doubt, between courage and indecision. To our fancy there is something humiliating in being thus at the mercy of our animal organism. We would fain find nobler causes for our emotions. We talk of the hiding of God's countenance, and the fiery darts of Satan. But the picture given here is true. The body is the channel of our noblest emotions as well as our sublimest sorrows.

Two practical results follow. First, instead of vilifying the body, complaining that our nobler part is chained down to a base partner, it is worth recollecting that the body too is the gift of God, in its way Divine—"the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and that to keep the body in temperance, soberness, and chastity, to guard it from pernicious influence, and to obey the laws of health, are just as much religious as they are moral duties; just as much obligatory on the Christian as they are on a member of a Sanitary Committee. Next, there are persons melancholy by constitution, in whom the tendency is incurable; you can not exorcise the phantom of despondency. But it is something to know that it is a phantom, and not to treat it as a reality—something taught by Elijah's history, if we only learn from it to be patient, and wait humbly the time and good pleasure of God.

2. Want of sympathy.

"I, even I only, am left." Lay the stress on *only*. The loneliness of his position was shocking to Elijah. Surprising this: for Elijah wanted no sympathy in a far harder trial on Mount Carmel. It was in a tone of triumph that he proclaimed that he was the single, solitary prophet of the Lord, while Baal's prophets were four hundred and fifty men.

Observe, however, the difference. There was in that case an opposition which could be grappled with: here there was nothing against which mere manhood was availing. The excitement was passed, the chivalrous look of the thing gone. To die as a martyr, yes, that were easy, in grand failure; but to die as a felon—to be hunted, caught, taken back to an ignominious death—flesh and blood recoiled from that.

And Elijah began to feel that popularity is not love. The world will support you when you have constrained its votes by a manifestation of power, and shrink from you when power and greatness are no longer on your side. "I, even I only, am left."

This trial is most distinctly realized by men of Elijah's stamp and placed under Elijah's circumstances. It is the penalty paid by superior mental and moral qualities, that such men must make up their minds to live without sympathy. Their feelings will be misunderstood, and their projects uncomprehended. They must be content to live alone. It is sad to hear such appeal from the present to the judgment of the future. Poor consolation! Elijah has been judged at that bar. We are his posterity: our reverence this day is the judgment of posterity on him. But to Elijah what is that now? Elijah is in that quiet country where the voice of praise and the voice of blame are alike unheard. Elijah lived and died alone; once only the bitterness of it found expression. But what is posthumous justice to the heart that ached *then?*

What greater minds like Elijah's have felt intensely, all we have felt in our own degree. Not one of us but what has felt his heart aching for want of sympathy. We have had our lonely hours, our days of disappointment, and our moments of hopelessness—times when our highest feelings have been misunderstood, and our purest met with ridicule. Days when our heavy secret was lying unshared, like ice upon the heart. And then the spirit gives way: we have wished that all were over—that we could lie down tired, and rest like the children, from life—that the hour was come when we could put down the extinguisher on the lamp, and feel the last grand rush of darkness on the spirit.

Now, the final cause of this capacity for depression, the reason for which it is granted us, is that it may make God necessary. In such moments it is felt that sympathy beyond human is needful. Alone, the world against him, Elijah turns to God. "It is enough: now, *O Lord.*"

3. Want of occupation.

As long as Elijah had a prophet's work to do, severe as that work was, all went on healthily; but his occupation was gone. To-morrow and the day after, what has he left on earth to do? The misery of having nothing to do proceeds from causes voluntary or involuntary in their nature. Multitudes of our race, by circumstances over which they have no control—in single life or widowhood—in straitened circumstances—are compelled to endure lonely days, and still more lonely nights and evenings. They who have felt the hours hang so heavy can comprehend part of Elijah's sadness.

This misery, however, is sometimes voluntarily incurred. In artificial civilization certain persons exempt themselves from the necessity of work. They eat the bread which has been procured by the sweat of the brow of others—they skim the surface of the thought which has been ploughed by the sweat of the brain of others. They are reckoned the favored ones of fortune, and envied. Are they blessed? The law of life is, in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread. No man can evade that law with impunity. Like all God's laws, it is its own executioner. It has strange penalties annexed to it: would you know them? Go to the park, or the esplanade, or the solitude after the night of dissipation, and read the penalties of being useless, in the sad, jaded, listless countenances—nay, in the very trifles which must be contrived to create excitement artificially. Yet these very eyes could, dull as they are, beam with intelligence: on many of those brows is stamped the mark of possible nobility. The fact is, that the capacity of ennui is one of the signatures of man's immortality. It is his very greatness which makes inaction misery. If God had made us only to be insects, with no nobler care incumbent on us than the preservation of our lives, or the pursuit of happiness, we might be content to flutter from sweetness to sweetness, and from bud to flower. But if men with souls live only to eat and drink and be amused, is it any wonder if life be darkened with despondency?

4. Disappointment in the expectation of success.

On Carmel the great object for which Elijah had lived seemed on the point of being realized. Baal's prophets were slain—Jehovah acknowledged with one voice—false worship put down. Elijah's life-aim, the transformation of Israel into a kingdom of God, was all but accomplished. In a single day all this bright picture was annihilated.

Man is to desire success, but success rarely comes. The wisest has written upon life its sad epitaph—"All is vanity," *i. e.*, nothingness.

The tradesman sees the noble fortune for which he lived, every coin of which is the representative of so much time and labor spent, squandered by a spendthrift son. The purest statesmen find themselves at last neglected, and rewarded by defeat. Almost never can a man look back on life and say that its anticipations have been realized. For the most part life is disappointment, and the moments in which this is keenly realized are moments like this of Elijah's.

II. God's treatment of it.

1. First He recruited His servant's exhausted strength. Read the history. Miraculous meals are given—then Elijah sleeps, wakes, and eats: on the strength of that goes forty days' journey. In other words, like a wise physician, God administers food, rest, and exercise, and then, and not till then, proceeds to expostulate; for before, Elijah's mind was unfit for reasoning.

Persons come to the ministers of God in seasons of despondency; they pervert with marvellous ingenuity all the consolation which is given them, turning wholesome food into poison. Then we begin to perceive the wisdom of God's simple homely treatment of Elijah, and discover that there are spiritual cases which are cases for the physician rather than the divine.

2. Next Jehovah calmed his stormy mind by the healing influences of Nature. He commanded the hurricane to sweep the sky, and the earthquake to shake the ground. He lighted up the heavens till they were one mass of fire. All this expressed and reflected Elijah's feelings. The mode in which Nature soothes us is by finding meeter and no-

blei utterance for our feelings than we can find in words—by expressing and exalting them. In expression there is relief. Elijah's spirit rose with the spirit of the storm. Stern, wild defiance—strange joy—all by turns were imaged there. Observe, "*God* was not in the wind," nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake. It was Elijah's stormy self reflected in the moods of the tempest, and giving them their character.

Then came a calmer hour. Elijah rose in reverence—felt tenderer sensations in his bosom. He opened his heart to gentler influences, till at last out of the manifold voices of Nature there seemed to speak, not the stormy passions of the man, but the "still small voice" of the harmony and the peace of God.

There are some spirits which must go through a discipline analogous to that sustained by Elijah. The storm-struggle must precede the still small voice. There are minds which must be convulsed with doubt before they can repose in faith. There are hearts which must be broken with disappointment before they can rise into hope. There are dispositions which, like Job, must have all things taken from them before they can find all things again in God. Blessed is the man who, when the tempest has spent its fury, recognizes his Father's voice in its under-tone, and bares his head and bows his knee, as Elijah did. To such spirits, generally those of a stern rugged cast, it seems as if God had said, "In the still sunshine and ordinary ways of life you can not meet Me, but like Job, in the desolation of the tempest, you shall see My form, and hear My voice, and know that your Redeemer liveth."

3. Besides, God made him feel the earnestness of life. What *doest* thou here, Elijah? Life is for doing. A prophet's life for nobler doing—and the prophet was not doing, but moaning.

Such a voice repeats itself to all of us, rousing us from our lethargy, or our despondency, or our protracted leisure, "What doest thou here?" here in this short life. There is work to be done—evil put down—God's Church purified—good men encouraged—doubting men directed—a country to be saved—time going—life a dream—eternity long—one chance, and but one forever. What *doest thou* here?

Then he went on farther: "Arise, go on thy way." That speaks to us: on thy way. Be up and doing; fill up every hour, leaving no crevice or craving for a remorse, or a repentance to creep through afterwards. Let not the mind brood on self; save it from speculation, from those stagnant moments in which the awful teachings of the spirit grope into the unfathomable unknown, and the heart torments itself with questions which are insoluble except to an active life. For the awful Future becomes intelligible only in the light of a felt and active Present. Go, return on thy way if thou art desponding—*on thy way;* health of spirit will return.

4. He completed the cure by the assurance of victory. "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So, then, Elijah's life had been no failure after all. Seven thousand at least in Israel had been braced and encouraged by his example, and silently blessed him, perhaps, for the courage which they felt. In God's world for those that are in earnest there is no failure. No work truly done—no word earnestly spoken—no sacrifice freely made, was ever made in vain. Never did the cup of cold water given for Christ's sake lose its reward.

We turn naturally from this scene to a still darker hour and more august agony. If ever failure seemed to rest on a noble life, it was when the Son of Man, deserted by His friends, heard the cry which proclaimed that the Pharisees had successfully drawn the net round their Divine victim. Yet from that very hour of defeat and death there went forth the world's life—from that very moment of apparent failure there proceeded forth into the ages the spirit of the conquering Cross. Surely if the Cross says any thing, it says that apparent defeat is real victory, and that there is a heaven for those who have *nobly and truly* failed on earth.

Distinguish, therefore, between the real and the apparent. Elijah's apparent success was in the shouts of Mount Carmel. His real success was in the unostentatious, unsurmised obedience of the seven thousand who had taken his God for their God.

This is a lesson for all: for teachers who lay their heads down at night sickening over their thankless task. Remember the power of *indirect* influences: those which distill from a life, not from a sudden, brilliant effort. The former never fail, the latter often. There is good done of which we can never predicate the when or where. Not in the flushing of a pupil's cheek, or the glistening of an attentive eye; not in the shining results of an examination does your real success lie. It lies in that invisible influence on character which He alone can read who counted the seven thousand nameless ones in Israel.

For ministers, again—what is ministerial success? Crowded churches—full aisles—attentive congregations—the approval of the religious world—much impression produced?

Elijah thought so; and when he found out his mistake, and discovered that the applause on Carmel subsided into hideous stillness, his heart well-nigh broke with disappointment. Ministerial success lies in altered lives and obedient humble hearts: unseen work recognized in the judgment-day.

What is a public man's success? That which can be measured by feast-days and the number of journals which espouse his cause? Deeper, deeper far must he work who works for eternity. In the eye of that, nothing stands but gold—real work: all else perishes.

Get below appearances, below glitter and show. Plant your foot upon reality. Not in the jubilee of the myriads on Carmel, but in the humble silence of the hearts of the seven thousand, lay the proof that Elijah had not lived in vain.

VI.

NOTES ON PSALM LI.

Written by David after a double crime:—Uriah put in the forefront of the battle—the wife of the murdered man taken, etc.

A DARKER guilt you will scarcely find—kingly power abused—worst passions yielded to. Yet this psalm breathes from a spirit touched with the finest sensibilities of spiritual feeling.

Two sides of our mysterious twofold being here. Something in us near to hell: something strangely near to God. "Half beast—half devil?" No: rather half diabolical—half divine: half demon—half God. This man mixing with the world's sins in such sort that we shudder. But he draws near the Majesty of God, and becomes softened, purified, melted.

It is good to observe this, that we rightly estimate: generously of fallen humanity, moderately of highest saintship.

In our best estate and in our purest moments there is a something of the devil in us which, if it could be known, would make men shrink from us. The germs of the worst crimes are in us all. In our deepest degradation there remains something sacred, undefiled, the pledge and gift of our better nature: a germ of indestructible life, like the grains of wheat among the cerements of a mummy surviving through three thousand years, which *may* be planted, and live, and grow again.

It is this truth of human feeling which makes the Psalms, more than any other portion of the Old Testament, the link of union between distant ages. The historical books need a rich store of knowledge before they can be a modern book of life, but the Psalms are the records of individual experience. Personal religion is the same in all ages. The deeps of our humanity remain unruffled by the storms of ages which change the surface. This psalm, written three thousand years ago, might have been written yesterday: describes the vicissitudes of spiritual life in an Englishman as truly as of a Jew. "Not of an age, but for all time."

I. Scripture estimate of sin.
II. Spiritual restoration.

I. Scripture estimate of sin.

1. Personal accountability. "My sin"—strange, but true. It is hard to believe the sin we do our own. One lays the blame on circumstances; another on those who tempted; a third on Adam, Satan, or his own nature, as if it were not himself. "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

In this psalm there is no such self-exculpation. Personal accountability is recognized throughout. No source of evil suggested or conceived but his own guilty will—no shifting of responsibility—no pleading of a passionate nature, or of royal exposure as peculiar. "I have sinned." "I acknowledge *my* transgression: *my* sin is ever before me."

One passage only seems at first to breathe a different tone: "In sin did my mother conceive me." By some interpreted as referring to hereditary sin: alleged as a proof of the doctrine of transmitted guilt, as if David traced the cause of his act to his maternal character.

True as the doctrine is that physical and moral qualities are transmissible, you do not find that doctrine here. It is not in excuse, but in exaggeration of his fault that David speaks. He lays on himself the blame of a tainted nature, instead of that of a single fault: not a murder only, but of a murderous nature. "Conceived in sin." From his first moments up till then, he saw sin—sin—sin: nothing but sin.

Learn the individual character of sin—its personal origin, and personal identity. There can be no transference of it. It is individual and incommunicable. My sin can not be your sin, nor yours mine.

Conscience, when it is healthy, ever speaks thus: "my transgression." It was not the guilt of them that tempted you — they have theirs; but each as a separate agent, his own degree of guilt. Yours is your own; the violation of your own and not another's sense of duty; solitary, awful, unshared, adhering to you alone of all the spirits of the universe.

Perilous to refer the evil in us to any source out of and beyond ourselves. In this way penitence becomes impossible: fictitious.

2. Estimated as hateful to God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The simple judgment of the conscience. But another estimate, born of the intellect, comes in collision with this religion and bewilders it. Look over life, and you will find it hard to believe that sin is *against* God; that it is not rather *for* Him.

Undeniable, that out of evil comes good—that evil is the resistance in battle, with which good is created and becomes possible. Physical evil, for example, hunger, an evil, is the parent of industry, human works, all that man has done: it beautifies life. The storm-fire burns up the forest, and slays man and beast, but purifies the air of contagion. Lately, the tragic death of eleven fishermen elicited the sympathy and charities of thousands.

Even moral evil is also generative of good. Peter's cowardice enabled him to be a comforter: "when he was converted, to strengthen his brethren." David's crime was a vantage-ground, from which he rose through penitence nearer to God. Through it this psalm has blessed ages. But if the sin had not been done!

Now, contemplating this, we begin to perceive that evil is God's instrument. "If evil be in the city, the Lord hath done it." Then the contemplative intellectualist looks over this scene of things, and complacently approves of evil as God's contrivance as much as good is—a temporary necessity, worthy of His wisdom to create. And then, can He truly hate that which He has made? Can His agent be his enemy? Is it not short-sightedness to be angry with it? Not the antagonist of God surely, but His creature and faithful servant this evil. Sin can not be "against God."

Thus arises a horrible contradiction between the instincts of the conscience and the judgment of the understanding. Judas must have been, says the intellect, God's agent as much as Paul. "Why doth He yet find fault? for who had resisted His will? Do not evil men perform His will? Why should I blame sin in another or myself, seeing it is necessary? Why not say at once, crime and virtue are the same?"

Thoughts such as these, at some time or another, I doubt not haunt and perplex us all. Conscience is overborne by the intellect. Some time during every life the impossibility of reconciling these two verdicts is felt, and the perplexity confuses action. Men sin with a secret peradventure behind. "Perhaps evil is not so bad, after all—perhaps good—who knows?"

Remember, therefore, in matters practical, conscience, not intellect, is our guide. Unsophisticated conscience ever speaks this language of the Bible.

We can not help believing that our sentiments towards right and wrong are a reflection of God's. That we call just and true, we can not but think is just and true in His sight. That which seems base and vile to us, we are compelled to think is so to Him—and this in proportion as we act up to duty. In that proportion we feel that His sentiments coincide with ours.

In such moments when the God within us speaks most peremptorily and distinctly, we feel that the language of this psalm is true, and that no other language expresses the truth. Sin is not *for* God—can not be, but "against God." An opposition to His will, a contradiction to His nature, not a coincidence with it. He abhors it—will banish it, and annihilate it.

In these days, when French sentimentalism, theological dreams, and political speculations are unsettling the old landmarks with fearful rapidity, if we do not hold fast, and that simply, and firmly, that first principle, that right is right, and wrong wrong, all our moral judgments will become confused, and the penitence of the noblest hearts an absurdity. For what can be more absurd than knowingly to reproach ourselves for that which God intended?

3. Sin estimated as separation from God. Two views of sin: The first reckoning it evil, because consequences of pain are annexed; the second evil, because a contradiction of our own nature and God's will.

In this psalm the first is ignored; the second, implied throughout. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" "Have mercy upon me," does not mean, Save me from torture. You can not read the psalm and think so. It is not the trembling of a craven spirit in anticipation of torture, but the agonies of a noble one in the horror of *being* evil.

If the first view were true, then—if God were by an act of will to reverse the consequences, and annex pain to goodness and joy to crime—to lie and injure would become duty as much as before they were sins. But penalties do not change good into evil. Good is forever good; evil forever evil. God Himself could not alter that by a command. Eternal hell could not make truth wrong, nor everlasting pleasure ennoble sensuality.

Do you fancy that men like David, shuddering in sight of evil, dreaded a material hell? I venture to say, into true penitence the idea of punishment never enters. If it did, it would be almost a relief; but oh! those moments in which a selfish act has appeared more hideous than any pain which the fancy of a Dante could devise! when the idea of the strife of self-will in battle with the loving will of God prolonged forever has painted itself to the imagination as the real infinite hell! when self-concentration and the extinction of love in the soul has been felt as the real damnation of the devil-nature!

And recollect how sparingly Christianity appeals to the prudential motives. Use them it does, because they are motives, but rarely. Retribution is a truth; and Christianity, true to nature, warns of retribution. But, except to rouse men sunk in forgetfulness, or faltering with truth, it almost never appeals to it: and never, with the hope of eliciting from such motives as the hope of heaven or the fear of hell, high goodness.

To do good for reward, the Son of Man declares to be the sinner's religion. "If ye lend to them who lend to you, what thank have ye?" and He distinctly proclaims that alone to be spiritually good, "the righteousness of God," which "does good, hoping for nothing in return;" adding, as the only motive, "that ye may be the children of (*i. e.*, resemble) your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

II. Restoration.

First step, sacrifice of a broken spirit.

Observe the accurate and even Christian perception of the real meaning of sacrifice by the ancient spiritually-minded Jews.

Sacrifice has its origin in two feelings: one human, one divine or inspired.

True feeling: something to be given to God: surrendered: that God must be worshipped with our best.

Human: added to this, mixed up with it, is the fancy that this sacrifice pleases God because of the loss or pain which it inflicts. Then men attribute to God their own revengeful feelings; think that the philosophy of sacrifice consists in the necessity of punishing: call it justice to let the blow fall somewhere—no matter where: blood must flow. Hence heathen sacrifices were offered to *appease* the Deity, to buy off His wrath—the purer the offering the better:—to glut His fury. Instances illustrating the feeling: Iphigenia; Zaleucus; two eyes given to the law: barbarian rude notions of justness mixed up with a father's instincts. Polycrates and Amasis; seal sacrificed to avert the anger of heaven—supposed to be jealous of mortal prosperity. These notions were mixed with Judaism: nay, are mixed up now with Christian conceptions of Christ's sacrifice.

Jewish sacrifices therefore presented two thoughts—to the spiritual, true notions; to the unspiritual, false; and expressed these feelings for each. But men like David felt that what lay beneath all sacrifice as its ground and meaning was surrender to God's will—that a man's best is himself—and to sacrifice this is the true sacrifice. By degrees they came to see that the sacrifice was but a form—typical; and that it might be superseded.

Compare this psalm with Psalm L.

They were taught this chiefly through sin and suffering. Conscience, truly wounded, could not be appeased by these sacrifices which were offered year by year continually. The selfish coward, who saw in sin nothing terrible but the penalty, could be satisfied of course. Believing that the animal bore his punishment, he had nothing more to dread. But they who felt sin to be estrangement from God, who were not thinking of punishment, what relief could be given to them by being told that the *penalty* of their sins was borne by another being? They felt that only by surrender to God could conscience be at rest.

Learn then—God does not wish pain, but goodness; not suffering, but you—yourself—your heart.

Even in the sacrifice of Christ, God wished only this. It was precious not because it was pain, but because the pain, the blood, the death were the last and highest evidence of entire surrender. Satisfaction? Yes, the blood of Christ satisfied. Why? Because God can glut His vengeance in innocent blood more sweetly than in guilty? Because, like the barbarian Zaleucus, so long as the whole penalty is paid, He cares not by whom? Or was it because for the first time He saw human nature a copy of the Divine nature—the will of Man the Son perfectly coincident with the will of God the Father—the love of duty for the first time exhibited by man—obedience entire, "unto death, even the death of the cross?" Was not that the sacrifice which He saw in His beloved Son wherewith He was well pleased? Was not that the sacrifice of Him who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God: the sacrifice once offered which hath perfected forever them that are sanctified?

2. Last step, spirit of liberty. "Thy free spirit"—literally, princely. But the translation is right. A princely is a free spirit—unconstrained. Hence St. James calls it "the royal law of liberty."

Two classes of motives may guide to acts of seeming goodness: 1. Prudential; 2. Generous.

The agent of the temperance society appeals to prudential motives when he demonstrates the evils of intoxication; enlists the aid of anatomy; contrasts the domestic happiness and circumstantial comfort of the temperate home with that of the intemperate. An appeal to the desire of happiness and fear of misery. A motive, doubtless, and of unquestionable potency. All I say is, that from this class of motives comes nothing of the highest stamp.

Prudential motives will move me: but compare the rush of population from east to west for gold with a similar rush in the time of the Crusades. A dream — a fancy; but an appeal to generous and unselfish emotions — to enthusiasm which has in it no reflex consideration of personal greed: in the one case, simply a transfer of population, with vices and habits unchanged; in the other, a sacrifice of home, country, all.

Tell men that salvation is personal happiness, and damnation personal misery, and that goodness consists in seeking the one and avoiding the other, and you will get religionists: but poor, stunted, dwarfish — asking, with painful self-consciousness, Am I saved? Am I lost? Prudential considerations about a distant happiness, conflicting with passionate impulses to secure a near and present one: men moving in shackles—"letting I dare not wait upon I would."

Tell men that God is love: that right is right, and wrong wrong: let them cease to admire philanthropy, and begin to love men: cease to pant for heaven, and begin to love God: then the spirit of liberty begins.

When fear has done its work—whose office is not to create holiness but to arrest conscience—and self-abasement has set in in earnest, then the free Spirit of God begins to breathe upon the soul like a gale from a healthier climate, refreshing it with a more generous and a purer love. Prudence is no longer left in painful and hopeless struggle with desire: love bursts the shackles of the soul, and we are free

VII.

OBEDIENCE THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

ASSIZE SERMON.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—John vii. 17.

The first thing we have to do is to put ourselves in possession of the history of these words.

Jesus taught in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews marvelled at His spiritual wisdom. The cause of wonder was the want of scholastic education: "How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?" They had no conception of any source of wisdom beyond learning.

He Himself gave a different account of the matter. "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." And how He came possessed of it, speaking humanly, He taught (chap. v. 30): "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

That principle whereby He attained spiritual judgment or wisdom, He extends to all. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Here, then, manifestly, there are two opinions respecting the origin of spiritual knowledge:

1. The popular one of the Jews, relying on a cultivated understanding.

2. The principle of Christ, which relied on trained affections, and habits of obedience.

What is truth? Study, said the Jews. Act, said Christ, and you shall know. A very precious principle to hold by in these days, and a very pregnant one of thought to us, who during the next few days must be engaged in the contemplation of crime, and to whom the question will suggest itself, how can men's lives be made true?

Religious controversy is fast settling into a conflict between two great extreme parties—those who believe every thing, and those who believe nothing: the disciples of credulity, and the disciples of skepticism.

The first rely on authority. Foremost among these, and the only self-consistent ones, are the adherents of the Church of Rome; and into this body, by logical consistency, ought to merge all—Dissenters, Churchmen, Bible Christians; all who receive their opinions because their sect, their church, or their documents assert them, not because they are true eternally in themselves.

The second class rely solely on a cultivated understanding. This is the root principle of Rationalism. Enlighten, they say, and sin will disappear. Enlighten, and we shall know all that can be known of God. Sin is an error of the understanding, not a crime of the will. Illuminate the understanding, show man that sin is folly, and sin will disappear. Political economy will teach public virtue; knowledge of anatomy will arrest the indulgence of the passions. Show the drunkard the inflamed tissues of the brain, and he will be sobered by fear and reason.

Only enlighten fully, and spiritual truths will be tested. When the anatomist shall have hit on a right method of dissection, and appropriated sensation to this filament of the brain, and the religious sentiment to that fibre, we shall know whether there be a soul or not, and whether consciousness will survive physical dissolution. When the chemist shall have discovered the principle of life, and found cause behind cause, we shall know whether the last cause of all is a personal will or a lifeless force.

Concerning whom I only remark now, that these disciples of skepticism easily become disciples of credulity. It is instructive to see how they who sneer at Christian mysteries as old wives' fables, bow in abject reverence before Egyptian mysteries of three thousand years' antiquity; and how they who have cast off a God believe in the veriest imposture, and have blind faith in the most vulgar juggling. Skepticism and credulity meet. Nor is it difficult to explain. Distrusting every thing, they doubt their own conclusions and their own mental powers; and that for which they can not account presents itself to them as supernatural and mysterious. Wonder makes them more credulous than those they sneer at.

In opposition to both these systems stands the Christianity of Christ.

1. Christ never taught on personal authority. "My doctrine is not mine." He taught "not as the scribes." They dogmatized: "because it was written"—stickled for maxims, and lost principles. His authority was the authority of truth, not of personality: He commanded men to believe, not because He said it, but He said it because it was true.

Hence John xii. 47, 48, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

2. He never taught that cultivation of the understanding would do all, but exactly the reverse. And so taught His apostles. St. Paul taught, "The world by wisdom knew not God." His Master said not that clear intellect will give you a right heart, but that a right heart and a pure life will clarify the intellect. Not, become a man of letters and learning, and you will attain spiritual freedom: but, Do rightly, and you will judge justly: obey, and you will know. "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which sent me." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I. The knowledge of the truth, or Christian knowledge.
II. The condition on which it is attainable.

I. Christian knowledge—"he shall know." Its object—"the doctrine." Its degree—certainty—"shall *know*."

Doctrine is now, in our modern times, a word of limited meaning; being simply opposed to practical. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount would be called practical: St. Paul's Epistles doctrinal. But in Scripture, doctrine means broadly, teaching: any thing that is taught is doctrine. Christ's doctrine embraces the whole range of His teaching—every principle and every precept. Let us select three departments of "doctrine" in which the principle of the text will be found true—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

1. It holds good in speculative truth. If any man will do God's will, he shall know what is truth and what is error. Let us see how willfulness and selfishness hinder impartiality. How comes it that men are almost always sure to arrive at the conclusions reached by their own party? Surely because fear, interest, vanity, or the desire of being reckoned sound and judicious, or party spirit, bias them. Personal prospects, personal antipathies, these determine most men's creed. How will you remove this hindrance? By increased cultivation of mind? Why, the Romanist is as accomplished as the Protestant, and learning is found in the Church and out of it. You are not sure that high mental cultivation will lead a man either to Protestantism or to the Church of England. Surely, then, by removing self-will, and so only, can the hindrance to right opinions be removed. Take away the

last trace of interested feeling, and the way is cleared for men to come to an approximation towards unity, even in judgment on points speculative; and so he that will do God's will shall know of the doctrine.

2. In practical truths the principle is true. It is more true to say that our opinions depend upon our lives and habits, than to say that our lives depend upon our opinions, which is only now and then true. The fact is, men think in a certain mode on these matters because their life is of a certain character, and their opinions are only invented afterwards as a defense for their life.

For instance, St. Paul speaks of a maxim among the Corinthians, "Let us eat and drink, *for* to-morrow we die." They excused their voluptuousness on the ground of its consistency with their skeptical creed. Life was short. Death came to-morrow. There was no hereafter. Therefore it was quite consistent to live for pleasure. But who does not see that the creed was the result, and not the cause of the life? Who does not see that *first* they ate and drank, and *then* believed to-morrow we die? "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." Eating and drinking, we lose sight of the life to come. When the immortal is overborne and smothered in the life of the flesh, how *can* men believe in life to come? Then disbelieving, they mistook the cause for the effect. Their moral habits and creed were in perfect consistency: yet it was the life that formed the creed, not the creed that formed the life. Because they were sensualists, immortality had become incredible.

Again, slavery is defended philosophically by some. The negro, on his skull and skeleton, they say, has God's intention of his servitude written: he is the inferior animal, therefore it is right to enslave him. Did this doctrine precede the slave-trade? Did man arrive at it, and then in consequence, conscientiously proceed with human traffic? Or was it invented to defend a practice existing already—the offspring of self-interest? Did not men first make slaves, and then search about for reasons to make their conduct plausible to themselves?

So, too, a belief in predestination is sometimes alleged in excuse of crime. But a man who suffers his will to be overpowered, naturally comes to believe that he is the sport of fate: feeling powerless, he believes that God's decree has made him so. But let him but put forth one act of loving will, and then, as the nightmare of a dream is annihilated by an effort, so the incubus of a belief in tyrannous destiny is dissipated the moment a man wills to do the will of God.

Observe, how he knows the doctrine, directly he does the will.

There is another thing said respecting this knowledge of truth. It respects the degree of certainty—"he shall *know*," not he shall have an opinion. There is a wide distinction between supposing and knowing—between fancy and conviction—between opinion and belief. Whatever rests on authority remains only supposition. You have an opinion when you know what others think. You *know* when you feel. In matters practical you know only so far as you can do. Read a work on the "Evidences of Christianity," and it may become highly probable that Christianity, etc., are true. That is an opinion. Feel God, do His will, till the Absolute Imperative within you speaks as with a living voice, Thou shalt, and thou shalt not; and then you do not think, you *know* that there is a God. That is a conviction and a belief.

Have we never seen how a child, simple and near to God, cuts asunder a web of sophistry with a single direct question—how, before its steady look and simple argument, some fashionable utterer of a conventional falsehood has been abashed?—how a believing Christian scatters the forces of skepticism, as a morning ray, touching the mist on the mountain side, makes it vanish into thin air? And there are few more glorious moments of our humanity than those in which faith does battle against intellectual proof: when, for example, after reading a skeptical book, or hearing a cold-blooded materialist's demonstration in which God, the soul, and life to come, are proved impossible, up rises the heart in all the giant might of its immortality to do battle with the understanding, and with the simple argument, "I *feel* them in my best and highest moments to be true," annihilates the sophistries of logic.

These moments of profound faith do not come once for all: they vary with the degree and habit of obedience. There is a plant which blossoms once in a hundred years. Like it, the soul blossoms only now and then in a space of years; but these moments are the glory and the heavenly glimpses of our purest humanity.

II. The condition on which knowledge of truth is attainable. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

This universe is governed by laws. At the bottom of every thing here there is a law. Things are in this way and not that: we call that a law or condition. All departments have their own laws. By submission to them, you make them your own. Obey the laws of the body—such laws as say, Be temperate and chaste: or of the mind—such laws as say, Fix the attention, strengthen by exercise; and then their prizes are yours—health, strength, pliability of muscle, tenaciousness of memory, nimbleness of imagination, etc. Obey the laws of your spiritual being, and it has its prizes too. For instance, the condition or law of a peaceful life is submission to the law of meekness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The condition of the Beatific vision is a pure heart and life: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To the impure, God is simply invisible. The condition annexed to a sense of God's presence—in other words, that without which a sense of God's presence can not be—is obedience to the laws of love: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." The condition of spiritual wisdom and certainty in truth is obedience to the will of God, surrender of private will: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

In every department of knowledge, therefore, there is an appointed "organ," or instrument for discovery of its specific truth, and for appropriating its specific blessings. In the world of sense, the empirical intellect: in that world the Baconian philosopher is supreme. His Novum Organon is experience: he knows by experiment of touch, sight, sound, etc. The religious man may not contravene his assertions: he is lord in his own province. But in the spiritual world, the "organ" of the scientific man—sensible experience—is powerless. If the chemist, geologist, physiologist come back from their spheres and say, we find in the laws of affinity, in the deposits of past ages, in the structure of the human frame, no trace nor token of a God, I simply reply, I never expected you would. Obedience and self-surrender is the sole organ by which we gain a knowledge of that which can not be seen nor felt. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And just as by copying perpetually a master-painter's works we get at last an instinctive and infallible power of recognizing his touch, so by copying and doing God's will we recognize what is His: we know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether it be an arbitrary invention of a human self.

2. Observe the universality of the law. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of

God, or whether I speak of myself." The law was true of the man Christ Jesus Himself. He tells us it is true of all other men.

In God's universe there are no favorites of heaven who may transgress the laws of the universe with impunity—none who can take fire in the hand and not be burnt—no enemies of heaven who, if they sow corn, will reap nothing but tares. The law is just and true to all: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

In God's spiritual universe there are no favorites of heaven who can attain knowledge and spiritual wisdom apart from obedience. There are none reprobate by an eternal decree, who can surrender self, and in all things submit to God, and yet fail of spiritual convictions. It is not therefore a rare, partial condescension of God, arbitrary and causeless, which gives knowledge of the truth to some, and shuts it out from others, but a vast, universal, glorious law. The light lighteth every man that cometh into the world. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know."

See the beauty of this Divine arrangement. If the certainty of truth depended upon the proof of miracles, prophecy, or the discoveries of science, then truth would be in the reach chiefly of those who can weigh evidence, investigate history, and languages, study by experiment; whereas as it is, "The *meek* will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The humblest and the weakest may know more of God, of moral evil and of good, by a single act of charity, or a prayer of self-surrender, than all the sages can teach: ay, or all the theologians can dogmatize upon.

They know nothing, perhaps, these humble ones, of the evidences, but they are sure that Christ is their Redeemer. They can not tell what "matter" is, but they know that *they* are spirits. They know nothing of the "argument from design," but they feel God. The truths of God are spiritually discerned by them. They have never learned letters, but they have reached the Truth of Life.

3. Annexed to this condition, or a part of it, is earnestness. "If any man *will* do His will." Now that word "will" is not the will of the future tense, but will meaning volition: if any man wills, resolves, has the mind to do the will of God. So then it is not a chance fitful obedience that leads us to the truth, nor an obedience paid while happiness lasts and no longer, but an obedience rendered in entireness and

in earnest. It is not written, "If any man does His will," but if any man has the spirit and desire. If we are in earnest, we shall persevere like the Syrophenician woman, even though the ear of the universe seem deaf, and Christ Himself appear to bid us back. If we are not in earnest, difficulties will discourage us. Because will is wanting, we shall be asking still in ignorance and doubt, What is truth?

All this will seem to many people time misspent. They go to church because it is the custom, and all Christians believe it is the established religion. But there are hours, and they come to us all at some period of life or other, when the hand of Mystery seems to lie heavy on the soul—when some life-shock scatters existence, leaves it a blank and dreary waste henceforth forever, and there appears nothing of hope in all the expanse which stretches out, except that merciful gate of death which opens at the end—hours when the sense of misplaced or ill-requited affection, the feeling of personal worthlessness, the uncertainty and meanness of all human aims, and the doubt of all human goodness, unfix the soul from all its old moorings, and leave it drifting, drifting over the vast infinitude, with an awful sense of solitariness. Then the man whose faith rested on outward authority and not on inward life, will find it give way: the authority of the priest, the authority of the Church, or merely the authority of a document proved by miracles and backed by prophecy, the soul—conscious life hereafter—God—will be an awful desolate Perhaps. Well in such moments you doubt all—whether Christianity be true: whether Christ was man, or God, or a beautiful fable. You ask bitterly, like Pontius Pilate, What is truth? In such an hour what remains? I reply, obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest; force yourself to abound in little services; try to do good to others; be true to the duty that you know. *That* must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left to doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you, and "You shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

VIII.

RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION.

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"—Psalm xlii. 1–3.

The value of the public reading of the Psalms in our service is, that they express for us indirectly those deeper feelings which there would be a sense of indelicacy in expressing directly.

Example of Joseph: asking after his father, and blessing his brothers, as it were, under the personality of another.

There are feelings of which we do not speak to each other; they are too sacred and too delicate. Such are most of our feelings to God. If we do speak of them, they lose their fragrance: become coarse: nay, there is even a sense of indelicacy and exposure.

Now the Psalms afford precisely the right relief for this feeling: wrapped up in the forms of poetry, metaphor, etc., that which might seem exaggerated is excused by those who do not feel it; while they who do can read them, applying them, without the suspicion of uttering *their own* feelings. Hence their soothing power, and hence, while other portions of Scripture may become obsolete, they remain the most precious parts of the Old Testament. For the heart of man is the same in all ages.

This forty-second Psalm contains the utterance of a sorrow of which men rarely speak. There is a grief worse than lack of bread or loss of friends. Men in former times called it spiritual desertion. But at times the utterances of this solitary grief are, as it were, overheard, as in this Psalm. Read verses 6, 7. And in a more august agony, "My God. my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I. Causes of David's despondency.
II. The consolation.

I. Causes of David's despondency.

1. The thirst for God. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

There is a desire in the human heart best described as the cravings of infinitude. We are so made that nothing which has limits satisfies. Hence the sense of freedom and relief which comes from all that suggests the idea of boundlessness: the deep sky, the dark night, the endless circle, the illimitable ocean.

Hence, too, our dissatisfaction with all that is or can be done. There never was the beauty yet than which we could not conceive something more beautiful. None so good as to be faultless in our eyes. No deed done by us, but we feel we have it in us to do a better. The heavens are not clean in our sight, and the angels are charged with folly.

Therefore to never rest is the price paid for our greatness. Could we rest, we must become smaller in soul. Whoever is satisfied with what he does has reached his culminating point: he will progress no more. Man's destiny is to be not dissatisfied, but forever unsatisfied.

Infinite goodness—a beauty beyond what eye hath seen or heart imagined, a justice which shall have no flaw, and a righteousness which shall have no blemish—to crave for that, is to be "athirst for God."

2. The temporary loss of the sense of God's personality. "My soul is athirst for the living God."

Let us search our own experience. What we want is, we shall find—not infinitude, but a boundless *One;* not to feel that love is the *law* of this universe, but to feel One whose name is love.

For else, if in this world of order there be no One in whose bosom that order is centred, and of whose Being it is the expression; in this world of manifold contrivance, no personal affection which gave to the skies their trembling tenderness, and to the snow its purity, then order, affection, contrivance, wisdom, are only horrible abstractions, and we are in the dreary universe alone.

Foremost in the declaration of this truth was the Jewish religion. It proclaimed—not "Let us meditate on the Adorable Light, it shall guide our intellects"—which is the most sacred verse of the Hindoo sacred books—but "Thus saith the Lord, I am, that I am." In that word "I am" is declared personality; and it contains, too, in the expression, "Thus *saith*," the real idea of a revelation, viz., the voluntary approach of the Creator to the creature.

Accordingly, these Jewish Psalms are remarkable for that personal tenderness towards God—those outbursts of passionate individual attachment which are in every page. A person, asking and giving heart for heart—inspiring love, because feeling it—that was the Israelite's Jehovah.

Now distinguish this from the God of the philosopher and the God of the mere theologian.

The God of the mere theologian is scarcely a living God—He did live; but for some eighteen hundred years we are credibly informed that no trace of His life has been seen. The canon is closed The proofs that He was are in the things that He has made, and the books of men to whom He spake; but He inspires and works wonders no more. According to the theologians, He gives us proofs of design instead of God—doctrines instead of the life indeed.

Different, too, from the God of the philosopher. The tendency of philosophy has been to throw back the personal Being farther and still farther from the time when every branch and stream was believed a living power, to the period when "principles" were substituted for this belief; then "laws;" and the philosopher's God is a law into which all other laws are resolvable.

Quite differently to this speaks the Bible of God. Not as a law, but as the life of all that is—the Being who feels, and is felt—is loved, and loves again—feels my heart throb into His—counts the hairs of my head: feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies: hears my prayers, and interprets them through a Spirit which has affinity with my spirit.

It is a dark moment when the sense of that personality is lost: more terrible than the doubt of immortality. For of the two—eternity without a personal God, or God for seventy years without immortality—no one after David's heart would hesitate, "Give me God for life, to know and be known by Him." No thought is more hideous than that of an eternity without Him. "My soul is athirst for God." The desire for immortality is second to the desire for God.

3. The taunts of scoffers. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Now the hart here spoken of is the hart hunted, at bay, the big tears rolling from his eyes, and the moisture standing black upon his side. Let us see what the persecution was. "Where is now thy God?" (ver. 3). This is ever the way in religious perplexity: the unsympathizing world taunts or misunderstands. In spiritual grief they ask, Why is he not like others? In bereavement they call your deep sorrow unbelief. In misfortune they comfort you, like Job's friends, by calling it a visitation. Or like the barbarians at Melita when the viper fastened on Paul's hand, no doubt they call you an infidel, though your soul be crying after God. Specially in that dark and awful hour, when *He* called on God, "Eloi, Eloi," they said, "Let be: let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

Now this is sharp to bear. It is easy to say Christian fortitude should be superior to it; but in darkness to have no sympathy; when the soul gropes for God, to have the hand of man relax its grasp! Forest-flies, small as they are, drive the noble war-horse mad: therefore David says, "As a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" (ver. 10). Now, observe, this feeling of forsakenness is no proof of being forsaken. Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one. Nay, further, a man may be more decisively the servant of God and goodness while doubting His existence, and in the anguish of his soul crying for light, than while resting in a common creed, and coldly serving Him. There has been One at least whose apparent forsakenness and whose seeming doubt bears the stamp of the majesty of faith. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

II. David's consolation.

1. And first, in hope (see verse 5): distinguish between the *feelings* of faith that God is present, and the *hope* of faith that He will be so.

There are times when a dense cloud veils the sunlight: you can not see the sun, nor feel him. Sensitive temperaments feel depression, and that unaccountably and irresistibly. No effort can make you *feel.* Then you hope. Behind the cloud the sun is; from thence he will come; the day drags through, the darkest and longest night ends at last. Thus we bear the darkness and the otherwise intolerable cold, and many a sleepless night. It does not shine now, but it will.

So too, spiritually. There are hours in which physical derangement darkens the windows of the soul; days in which shattered nerves make life simply endurance; months and years in which intellectual difficulties, pressing for solution, shut out God. Then faith must be replaced by hope. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: *but* righteousness and truth are the habitation of His throne." "My soul, hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

2. This hope was *in God.*

The mistake we make is to look for a source of comfort in ourselves: self-contemplation, instead of gazing upon God. In other words, we look for comfort precisely where comfort never can be.

For first, it is impossible to derive consolation from our own feelings, because of their mutability: to-day we are well, and our spiritual experience, partaking of these circumstances, is bright; but to-morrow some outward circumstances change—the sun does not shine, or the wind is chill, and we are low, gloomy, and sad. Then if our hopes were unreasonably elevated, they will now be unreasonably depressed; and so our experience becomes flux and reflux, ebb and flow; like the sea, that emblem of instability.

Next, it is impossible to get comfort from our own acts; for though acts are the test of character, yet in a low state no man can judge justly of his own acts. They assume a darkness of hue which is reflected on them by the eye that contemplates them. It would be well for all men to remember that sinners can not judge of sin—least of all, can we estimate our own sin.

Besides, we lose time in remorse. I have sinned; well, by the grace of God I must endeavor to do better for the future. But if I mourn for it overmuch all to-day, refusing to be comforted, to-morrow I shall have to mourn the wasted to-day; and that again will be the subject of another fit of remorse.

In the wilderness, had the children of Israel, instead of gazing on the serpent, looked down on their own wounds to watch the process of the granulation of the flesh, and see how deep the wound was, and whether it was healing slowly or fast, cure would have been impossible: their only chance was to look off the wounds. Just so, when giving up this hopeless and sickening work of self-inspection, and turning from ourselves in Christian self-oblivion, we gaze on God, then first the chance of consolation dawns.

He is not affected by our mutability; our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless, He remains serene and calm; when we are low, selfish, mean, or dispirited, He is still the unalterable I AM. The same yesterday, to-day, and forever, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What God is in Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope "My soul, hope thou *in God.*"

IX.

FAITH OF THE CENTURION.

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."—Matt. viii. 10.

That upon which the Son of God fastened as worthy of admiration was not the centurion's benevolence, nor his perseverance, but his faith. And so speaks the whole New Testament, giving a special dignity to faith. By faith we are justified. By faith man removes mountains of difficulty. The Divinest attribute in the heart of God is love, and the mightiest, because the most human, principle in the breast of man is faith. Love is heaven, faith is that which appropriates heaven.

Faith is a theological term rarely used in other matters. Hence its meaning is obscured. But faith is no strange, new, peculiar power, supernaturally infused by Christianity, but the same principle by which we live from day to day—one of the commonest in our daily life.

We trust our senses, and that though they often deceive us. We trust men; a battle must often be risked on the intelligence of a spy. A merchant commits his ships, with all his fortunes on board, to a hired captain, whose temptations are enormous. Without this principle society could not hold together for a day. It would be a mere sand-heap.

Such, too, is religious faith; we trust on probabilities; and this though probabilities often are against us. We can not prove God's existence. The balance of probabilities, scientifically speaking, are nearly equal for a living person or a lifeless cause: immortality, etc., in the same way. But faith throws its own convictions into the scale and decides the preponderance.

Faith, then, is that which, when probabilities are equal, ventures on God's side, and on the side of right, on the guaranty of a something within which makes the thing seem to be true because it is loved.

It is so defined by St. Paul: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." The hope is the ground for faith to rest on We consider,

I. The faith which was commended.
II. The causes of the commendation.

I. The faith which was commended.

First evidence of its existence, his tenderness to his servant.

Of course this good act might have existed separate from religion. Romans were benevolent to their domestics ages before the law had been enacted regulating the relationship between patron and client.

But we are forbidden to view it so, when we remember that he was a proselyte. Morality is not religion, but it is ennobled and made more delicate by religion.

How? By instinct you may be kind to dependents. But if it be only by instinct, it is but the same kind of tenderness you show to your hound or horse. Disbelief in God, and right, and immortality, degrades the man you are kind to, to the level of the beast you feel for. Both are mortal, and for both your kindness is finite and poor.

But the moment faith comes, dealing as it does with things infinite, it throws something of its own infinitude on the persons loved by the man of faith, upon his affections and his acts: it raises them.

Consequently you find the centurion "building synagogues," "caring for our (*i. e.*, the Jewish) nation," as the repository of the truth — tending his servants. And this last, observe, approximated his moral goodness to the Christian standard! for therein does Christianity differ from mere religiousness, that it is not a worship of the high, but a lifting up of the low—not hero-worship, but Divine condescension.

Thus, then, was his kindness an evidence of his faith.

Second proof. His humility: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof."

Now Christ does not call this humility, though it was humility. He says, I have not found so great *faith*. Let us see why. How is humbleness the result of, or rather identical with, faith?

Faith is trust. Trust is dependence on another; the spirit which is opposite to independence or trust in self. Hence where the spirit of proud independence is, faith is not.

Now observe how this differs from our ordinary and modern modes of thinking. The first thing taught a young man is that he must be independent. Quite right, in the Christian sense of the word, to owe no man any thing: to resolve to get his own living, and not be beholden to charity, which fosters idleness: to depend on his own exertions, and not on patronage or connection. But what is commonly meant by independence is to rejoice at being bound by no ties to other human beings—to owe no allegiance to any will except our own—to be isolated and unconnected by any feeling of intercommunion or dependence; a spirit whose very life is jealousy and suspicion: which in politics is revolutionary, and in religion atheism. This is the opposite of Christianity, and the opposite of the Christian freedom whose name it usurps. For true freedom is to be emancipated from all false lords, in order to owe allegiance to all true lords—to be free from the slavery of all lusts, so as voluntarily to serve God and right. Faith alone frees.

And this was the freedom of the centurion: that he *chose* his master. He was not fawning on the emperor at Rome, nor courting the immoral ruler at Cæsarea who had titles and places to give away, but he bent in lowliest homage of heart before the Holy One. His freedom was the freedom of uncoerced and voluntary dependence—the freedom and humility of faith.

3. His belief in an invisible, living Will. "Speak the word only." Remark how different this is from a reliance on the influence of the senses. He asked not the presence of Christ, but simply an exertion of His will. He looked not like a physician to the operation of unerring laws, or the result of the contact of matter with matter. He believed in Him who is the life indeed. He felt that the Cause of causes is a person. Hence he could trust the Living Will out of sight. This is the highest form of faith.

Here, however, I observe—the centurion learned this through his own profession. "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me." The argument ran thus. I by the command of will obtain the obedience of my dependents. Thou by will the obedience of Thine: sickness and health are Thy servants. Evidently he looked upon this universe with a soldier's eye: he could not look otherwise. To him this world was a mighty camp of living forces in which authority was paramount. Trained in obedience to military law, accustomed to render prompt submission to those above him, and to extract it from those below him, he read law everywhere; and law to him meant nothing, unless it meant the expression of a personal will. It was this training through which faith took its *form*.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen; and, we may add, from *every part* of the creation of the world. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" but so also does the butter cup and the raindrop.

The invisible things of God from life are clearly seen—and, we may add, from every department of life. There is no profession, no trade, no human occupation which does not in its own way educate for God.

The soldier, through law, reads a personal will; and he might from the same profession, in the unity of an army, made a living and organized unity by the variety of its parts, have read the principle of God's and the Church's unity, through the opportunities that profession affords for self-control, for generous deeds. When the Gospel was first announced on earth, it was proclaimed to the shepherds and Magians in a manner appropriate to their modes of life.

Shepherds, like sailors, are accustomed to hear a supernatural power in the sounds of the air, in the moaning of the night-winds, in the sighing of the storm; to see a more than mortal life in the clouds that wreathe around the headland. Such men, brought up among the sights and sounds of nature, are proverbially superstitious. No wonder, therefore, that the intimation came to them, as it were, on the winds in the melodies of the air: "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

But the Magians being astrologers, accustomed to read the secrets of life and death in the clear star-lit skies of Persia, are conducted by a meteoric star.

Each in his own way; each in his own profession; each through that little spot of the universe given to him. For not only is God everywhere, but all of God is in every point. Not His wisdom here, and His goodness there: the whole truth may be read, if we had eyes, and heart, and time enough, in the laws of a daisy's growth. God's beauty, His love, His unity: nay, if you observe how each atom exists not for itself alone, but for the sake of every other atom in the universe, in that atom or daisy you may read the law of the Cross itself. The crawling of a spider before now has taught perseverance, and led to a crown. The little moss, brought close to a traveller's eye in an African desert, who had lain down to die, roused him to faith in that love which had so curiously arranged the minute fibres of a thing so small, to be seen once and but once by a human eye, and carried him in the strength of that heavenly repast, like Elijah of old, a journey of forty days and forty nights, to the sources of the Nile; yet who could have suspected divinity in a spider, or theology in a moss?

II. The causes of Christ's astonishment.

The reasons why he marvelled may be reduced under two heads.

1. The centurion was a Gentile; therefore unlikely to know revealed truth.

2. A soldier, and therefore exposed to a recklessness, and idleness, and sensuality which are the temptations of that profession. But he turned his loss to glorious gain.

The Saviour's comment, therefore, contained the advantage of disadvantages, and the disadvantage of advantages. The former, "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;" the latter, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There are spirits which are crushed by difficulties, while others would gain strength from them. The greatest men have been those who have cut their way to success through difficulties. And such have been the greatest triumphs of art and science: such, too, of religion. Moses, Elijah, Abraham, the Baptist, the giants of both Testaments, were not men nurtured in the hot-house of religious advantages. Many a man would have done good if he had not a superabundance of the means of doing it. Many a spiritual giant is buried under mountains of gold.

Understand, therefore, the real amount of advantage which there is in religious privileges. Necessary especially for the feeble, as crutches are necessary; but, like crutches, they often enfeeble the strong. For every advantage which facilitates performance and supersedes toil, a corresponding price is paid in loss. Civilization gives us telescopes and microscopes; but it takes away the unerring acuteness with which the savage reads the track of man and beast upon the ground at his feet: it gives us scientific surgery, and impairs the health which made surgery superfluous.

So, ask you where the place of religious might is? Not the place of religious privileges—not where prayers are daily, and sacraments monthly—not where sermons are so abundant as to pall upon the pampered taste, but on the hill-side with the Covenanter; in the wilderness with John the Baptist; in our own dependencies where the liturgy is rarely heard, and Christian friends meet at the end of months:—there amidst manifold disadvantages, when the soul is thrown upon itself, a few kindred spirits, and God, grow up those heroes of faith, like the centurion, whose firm conviction wins admiration even from the Son of God Himself.

Lastly, see how this incident testifies to the perfect humanity of Christ. The Saviour "marvelled:"—that wonder was no fictitious semblance of admiration. It was a real genuine wonder. He had not expected to find such faith. The Son of God increased in wisdom as well as stature. He knew more at thirty than at twenty. There were things He knew at twenty which He had not known before. In the last year of His life He went to the fig-tree expecting to find fruit, and was disappointed. In all matters of eternal truth, principles which are not measured by more or less true, His knowledge was absolute; but it would seem that in matters of earthly fact which are modified by time and space, His knowledge was, like ours, more or less dependent upon experience.

Now we forget this; we are shocked at the thought of the partial ignorance of Christ, as if it were irreverence to think it; we shrink from believing that He really felt the force of temptation, or that the forsakenness on the Cross and the momentary doubt have parallels in our human life. In other words, we make that Divine Life a mere mimic representation of griefs that were not real, and surprises that were feigned, and sorrows that were theatrical.

But thus we lose the Saviour. For it is well to know that He was divine; but if we lose that truth, we should still have a God in heaven. But if there has been on this earth no real, perfect human life, no love that never cooled, no faith that never failed, which may shine as a loadstar across the darkness of our experience, a light to light amidst all convictions of our own meanness and all suspicions of others' littleness, why, we may have a religion, but we have not a Christianity. For if we lose Him as a Brother, we can not feel Him as a Saviour.

X.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ERRING.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."—Gal. vi. 1, 2.

It would be a blessed thing for our Christian society if we could contemplate sin from the same point of view from which Christ and His apostles saw it. But in this matter society is ever oscillating between two extremes—undue laxity and undue severity.

In one age of the Church—the days of Donatism, for instance—men refuse the grace of repentance to those who have erred: holding that baptismal privileges once forfeited can not be got back; that for a single distinct lapse there is no restoration.

In another age, the Church, having found out its error, and discovered the danger of setting up an impossible standard, begins to confer periodical absolutions and plenary indulgences, until sin, easily forgiven, is as easily committed.

And so too with societies and legislatures. In one period Puritanism is dominant and morals severe. There are no small faults. The statute-book is defiled with the red mark of blood, set opposite innumerable misdemeanors. In an age still earlier the destruction of a wild animal is punished like the murder of a man. Then in another period we have such a medley of sentiments and sickliness that we have lost all our bearings, and can not tell what is vice and what is goodness. Charity and toleration degenerate into that feeble dreaminess which refuses to be roused by stern views of life.

This contrast, too, may exist in the same age, nay, in the same individual. One man gifted with talent, or privileged by rank, outrages all decency: the world smiles, calls it eccentricity, forgives, and is very merciful and tolerant. Then some one unshielded by these advantages, endorsed neither by wealth nor birth, sins—not to one-tenth, nor one-ten-thousandth part of the same extent: society is seized with a virtuous indignation, rises up in wrath, asks what is to become of the morals of the community if these things are committed, and protects its proprieties by a rigorous exclusion of the offender, cutting off the bridge behind him against his return forever.

Now the Divine character of the New Testament is shown in nothing more signally than in the stable ground from which it views this matter, in comparison with the shifting and uncertain standing-point from whence the world sees it. It says, never retracting nor bating, "The wages of sin is death." It speaks sternly, with no weak sentiment, "Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee." But then it accepts every excuse, admits every palliation: looks upon this world of temptation and these frail human hearts of ours, not from the cell of a monk or the study of a recluse, but in a large, real way; accepts the existence of sin as a fact, without affecting to be shocked or startled; assumes that it must needs be that offenses come, and deals with them in a large noble way, as the results of a disease which must be met—which should be, and which can be, cured.

I. The Christian view of other men's sin.
II. The Christian power of restoration.

I. The first thing noticeable in the apostle's view of sin is, that he looks upon it as if it might be sometimes the result of a surprise. "If a man be overtaken in a fault." In the original it is *anticipated, taken suddenly in front.* As if circumstances had been beforehand with the man: as if sin, supposed to be left far behind, had on a sudden got in front, tripped him up, or led him into ambush.

All sins are not of this character. There are some which are in accordance with the general bent of our disposition, and the opportunity of committing them was only the first occasion for manifesting what was in the heart: so that if they had not been committed then, they probably would or must have been at some other time; and looking back to them we have no right to lay the blame on circumstances—we are to accept the penalty as a severe warning meant to show what was in our hearts.

There are other sins of a different character. It seems as if it were not in us to commit them. They were, so to speak, unnatural to us: you were going quietly on your way, thinking no evil, suddenly temptation, for which you were not prepared, presented itself, and before you knew where you were, you were in the dust, fallen.

As, for instance, when a question is suddenly put to a man which never ought to have been put, touching a secret of his own or another's. Had he the presence of mind or adroitness, he might turn it aside, or refuse to reply. But being unprepared and accosted suddenly, he says hastily that which is irreconcilable with strict truth; then, to substantiate and make it look probable, misrepresents or invents something else; and so he has woven round himself a mesh which will entangle his conscience through many a weary day and many a sleepless night.

It is shocking, doubtless, to allow ourselves even to admit that this is possible; yet no one knowing human nature from men, and not from books, will deny that this might befall even a brave and true man. St. Peter was both; yet this was his history. In a crowd, suddenly, the question was put directly, "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth." Then came a prevarication—a lie; and yet another. This was a sin of surprise. He was overtaken in a fault.

Every one of us admits the truth of this in his own case Looking back to past life, he feels that the errors which have most terribly determined his destiny were the result of mistake. Inexperience, a hasty promise, excess of trust, incaution, nay, even a generous devotion, have been fearfully, and, as it seems to us, inadequately chastised. There may be some undue tenderness to ourselves when we thus palliate the past: still, a great part of such extenuation is only justice.

Now the Bible simply requires that we should judge others by the same rule by which we judge ourselves. The law of Christ demands that what we plead in our own case, we should admit in the case of others. Believe that in this or that case which you judge so harshly, the heart, in its deeps, did not consent to sin, nor by preference love what is hateful; simply admit that such an one may have been overtaken in a fault. This is the large law of charity.

1. Again, the apostle considers fault as that which has left a burden on the erring spirit. "Bear ye one another's burdens."

For we can not say to the laws of God, I was overtaken. We live under stern and unrelenting laws, which permit no excuse, and never heard of a surprise. They never send a man who has failed once back to try a second chance. There is no room for a mistake; you play against them for your life; and they exact the penalty inexorably, "Every man must bear his own burden." Every law has its own appropriate penalty; and the wonder of it is, that often the severest penalty seems set against the smallest transgression. We suffer more for our vices than our crimes; we pay dearer for our imprudences than even for our deliberate wickedness.

Let us examine this a little more closely. One burden laid on fault is that chain of entanglement which seems to drag down to fresh sins. One step necessitates many others. One fault leads to another, and crime to crime. The soul gravitates downward beneath its burden. It was profound knowledge indeed which prophetically refused to limit Peter's sin to once. "Verily I say unto thee . . . . thou shalt deny Me thrice."

We will try to describe that sense of burden. A fault has the power sometimes of distorting life till all seems hideous and unnatural. A man who has left his proper nature, and seems compelled to say and do things unnatural and in false show, who has thus become untrue to himself, to him life and the whole universe becomes untrue. He can grasp nothing; he does not stand on fact; he is living as in a dream—himself a dream. All is ghastly, unreal, spectral. A burden is on him as of a nightmare. He moves about in nothingness and shadows, as if he were not. His own existence swiftly passing might seem a phantom life, were it not for the corroding pang of anguish in his soul, for that at least is real!

2. Add to this, the burden of the heart weighing on itself.

It has been truly said that the human heart is like the millstone, which, if there be wheat beneath it, will grind to purposes of health; if not, will grind still, at the will of the wild wind, but on itself. So does the heart wear out itself against its own thought. One fixed idea—one remembrance, and no other — one stationary, wearing anguish. This is remorse, passing into despair; itself the goad to fresh and wilder crimes.

The worst of such a burden is that it keeps down the soul from good. Many an ethereal spirit, which might have climbed the heights of holiness, and breathed the rare and difficult air of the mountain-top, where the heavenliest spirituality alone can live, is weighed down by such a burden to the level of the lowest. If you know such an one, mark his history; without restoration, his career is done. That soul will not grow henceforth.

3. The burden of a secret.

Some here know the weight of an uncommunicated sin. They know how it lies like ice upon the heart. They know how dreadful a thing the sense of hypocrisy is; the knowledge of inward depravity, while all without looks pure as snow to men.

How heavy this weight may be, we gather from these indications. First, from this strange, psychological fact. A man with a guilty secret will tell out the tale of his crimes as under the personality of another; a mysterious necessity seems to force him to give it utterance—as in the old fable of him who breathed out his weighty secret to the reeds. A remarkable instance of this is afforded in the case of that murderer, who, from the richness of his gifts and the enormity of his crime, is almost a historical personage, who, having become a teacher of youth, was in the habit of narrating to his pupils the anecdote of his crime with all the circumstantial particularity of fact, but all the while under the guise of a pretended dream. Such men tread forever on the very verge of a confession: they seem to take a fearful pleasure in talking of their guilt, as if the heart could not bear its own burden, but must give it *outness.*

Again, is it evidenced by the attempt to get relief in profuse and general acknowledgments of guilt. They adopt the language of religion; they call themselves "vile dust and miserable sinners." The world takes generally what they mean particularly. But they get no relief, they only deceive themselves; for they have turned the truth itself into a falsehood, using true words which they know convey a false impression, and getting praise for humility instead of punishment for guilt. They have used all the effort, and suffered all the pang which it would have cost them to get real relief, and they have not got it; and the burden unacknowledged remains a burden still.

The third indication we have of the heaviness of this burden is the commonness of the longing for confession. None but a minister of the Gospel can estimate this: he only who, looking round his congregation, can point to person after person whose wild tale of guilt or sorrow he is cognizant of—who can remember how often similar griefs were trembling upon lips which did not unburden themselves—whose heart being the receptacle of the anguish of many, can judge what is in human hearts: he alone can estimate how much there is of sin and crime lying with the weight and agony of concealment on the spirits of our brethren.

The fourth burden is an intuitive consciousness of the hidden sins of others' hearts.

To two states of soul it is given to detect the presence of evil: states the opposite of each other—innocence and guilt.

It was predicted of the Saviour while yet a child, that by Him the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed; the fulfillment of this was the history of His life. He went through the world, by His innate purity detecting the presence of evil, as He detected the touch of her who touched His garment in the crowd.

Men, supposed spotless before, fell down before Him, crying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" This, in a lower degree, is true of all innocence: you would think that one who can deeply read the human heart and track its windings must be himself deeply experienced in evil. But it is not so—at least not always. Purity can detect the presence of the evil which it does not understand: just as the dove which has never seen a hawk trembles at its presence; and just as a horse rears uneasily when the wild beast unknown and new to it is near, so innocence understands, yet understands not the meaning of the unholy look, the guilty tone, the sinful manner. It shudders and shrinks from it by a power given to it, like that which God has conferred on the unreasoning mimosa. Sin gives the same power, but differently. Innocence apprehends the approach of evil by the instinctive tact of contrast; guilt, by the instinctive consciousness of similarity. It is the profound truth contained in the history of the Fall. The eyes are opened; the knowledge of good and evil has come. The soul knows its own nakedness, but it knows also the nakedness of all other souls which have sinned after the similitude of its own sin.

Very marvellous is that test-power of guilt: it is vain to think of eluding its fine capacity of penetration. Intimations of evil are perceived and noted, when to other eyes all seems pure. The dropping of an eye, the shunning of a subject, the tremulousness of a tone, the peculiarity of a subterfuge, will tell the tale. "These are tendencies like mine, and here is a spirit conscious as my own is conscious."

This dreadful burden the Scriptures call the knowledge of good and evil: can we not all remember the salient sense of happiness which we had when all was innocent—when crime was the tale of some far distant hemisphere, and the guilt we heard of was not suspected in the hearts of the beings around us? and can we not recollect, too, how by our own sin, or the cognizance of others' sin, there came a something which hung the heavens with shame and guilt, and all around seemed laden with evil? This is the worst burden that comes from transgression: loss of faith in human goodness; the being sentenced to go through life haunted with a presence from which we can not escape; the presence of evil in the hearts of all that we approach.

II. The Christian power of restoration: "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one."

First, then, restoration is possible. That is a Christian fact. Moralists have taught us what sin is; they have explained how it twines itself into habit; they have shown us its ineffaceable character. It was reserved for Christianity to speak of restoration. Christ, and Christ only, has revealed that he who has erred may be restored, and made pure and clean and whole again.

Next, however, observe that this restoration is accomplished by men. Causatively, of course, and immediately, restoration is the work of Christ and of God the Spirit. Mediately and instrumentally, it is the work of men. "*Brethren*, ... restore such an one." God has given to man the power of elevating his brother man. He has conferred on His Church the power of the keys to bind and loose, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." It is therefore in the power of man, by his conduct, to restore his brother, or to hinder his restora tion. He may loose him from his sins, or retain their power upon his soul.

Now the words of the text confine us to two modes in which this is done: by sympathy and by forgiveness. "Bear ye one another's burdens."

By sympathy. We Protestants have one unvarying sneer ready for the system of the Romish confessional. They confess, we say, for the sake of absolution, that absolved they may sin again. A shallow, superficial sneer, as all sneers are. In that craving of the heart which gives the system of the confessional its dangerous power, there is something far more profound than any sneer can fathom. It is not the desire to sin again that makes men long to unburden their conscience, but it is the yearning to be true, which lies at the bottom, even of the most depraved hearts, to appear what they are, and to lead a false life no longer; and besides this, it is the desire of sympathy. For this comes out of that dreadful sense of loneliness which is the result of sinning;—the heart severed from God, feels severed from all other hearts: goes alone as if it had neither part nor lot with other men; itself a shadow among shadows. And its craving is for sympathy: it wants some human heart to know what it feels. Thousands upon thousands of laden hearts around us are crying, Come and bear my burden with me; and observe here, the apostle says, "Bear ye one another's burdens." Nor let the priest bear the burdens of all: that were most unjust. Why should the priest's heart be the common receptacle of all the crimes and wickedness of a congregation? "Bear ye *one another's* burdens."

Again, by forgiveness. There is a truth in the doctrine of absolution. God has given to man the power to absolve his brother, and so restore him to himself. The forgiveness of man is an echo and an earnest of God's forgiveness. He whom society has restored realizes the possibility of restoration to God's favor. Even the mercifulness of one good man sounds like a voice of pardon from heaven: just as the power and the exclusion of men sound like a knell of hopelessness, and do actually bind the sin upon the soul. The man whom society will not forgive nor restore is driven into recklessness. This is the true Christian doctrine of absolution, as expounded by the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 7-10: the degrading power of severity, the restoring power of pardon, vested in the Christian community, the voice of the minister being but their voice.

Now, then, let us inquire into the Christianity of our society. Restoration is the essential work of Christianity

The Gospel is the declaration of God's sympathy and God's pardon. In these two particulars, then, what is our right to be called a Christian community?

Suppose that a man is overtaken in a fault. What does he, or what shall he do? Shall he retain it unacknowledged, or go through life a false man? God forbid. Shall he then acknowledge it to his brethren, that they by sympathy and merciful caution may restore him? Well, but is it not certain that it is exactly from those to whom the name of "brethren" most peculiarly belongs that he will not receive assistance? Can a man in mental doubt go to the members of the same religious communion? Does he not know that they precisely are the ones who will frown upon his doubts, and proclaim his sins? Will a clergyman unburden his mind to his brethren in the ministry? Are they not in their official rigor the least capable of largely understanding him? If a woman be overtaken in a fault, will she tell it to a sister-woman? Or does she not feel instinctively that her sister-woman is ever the most harsh, the most severe, and the most ferocious judge?

Well, you sneer at the confessional; you complain that mistaken ministers of the Church of England are restoring it amongst us. But who are they that are forcing on the confessional? who drive laden and broken hearts to pour out their long pent-up sorrows into any ear that will receive them? I say it is we: we by our uncharitableness; we by our want of sympathy and unmerciful behavior; we by the unchristian way in which we break down the bridge behind the penitent, and say, "On, on in sin—there is no returning."

Finally, the apostle tells us the spirit in which this is to be done, and assigns a motive for the doing it. The mode is, "in the spirit of meekness." For Satan can not cast out Satan. Sin can not drive out sin. For instance, my anger can not drive out another man's covetousness; my petulance or sneer can not expel another's extravagance. The meekness of Christ alone has power. The charity which desires another's goodness above his well-being, that alone succeeds in the work of restoration.

The motive is, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." For sin is the result of inclination or weakness, combined with opportunity. It is therefore in a degree the offspring of circumstances. Go to the hulks, the jail, the penitentiary, the penal colony, statistics will almost mark out for you beforehand the classes which have furnished the inmates, and the exact proportion of the delinquency of each class. You will not find the wealthy there, nor the noble nor those guarded by the fences of social life, but the poor, and the uneducated, and the frail, and the defenseless. Can you gravely surmise that this regular tabulation depends upon the superior virtue of one class compared with others? Or must you admit that the majority at least of those who have not fallen are safe because they were not tempted? Well, then, when St. Paul says, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted," it is as if he had written, Proud Pharisee of a man, complacent in thine integrity, who thankest God that thou art "not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, or as this publican," hast thou gone through the terrible ordeal and come off with unscathed virtue? Or art thou in all these points simply untried? Proud Pharisee of a woman, who passest by an erring sister with a haughty look of conscious superiority, dost thou know what temptation is, with strong feeling and mastering opportunity? Shall the rich-cut crystal which stands on the table of the wealthy man, protected from dust and injury, boast that it has escaped the flaws, and the cracks, and the fractures which the earthen jar has sustained, exposed and subjected to rough and general uses? Oh man or woman! thou who wouldst be a Pharisee, consider, oh consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

XI.

CHRIST THE SON.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."—Heb. i. 1, 2.

Two critical remarks.

1. "Sundry times"—more literally, sundry portions—sections, not of time, but of the matter of the revelation. God gave His revelation in parts, piecemeal, as you teach a child to spell a word—letter by letter, syllable by syllable—adding all at last together. God had a Word to spell—His own name. By degrees He did it. At last it came entire. The Word was made flesh.

2. "His Son," more correctly, "a Son"—for this is the very argument. Not that God now spoke by Christ, but that whereas once He spoke by prophets, now He spoke by a Son. The filial dispensation was the last.

This epistle was addressed to Christians on the verge of apostasy. See those passages: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." "Cast not away your confidence." "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Observe what the danger was. Christianity had disappointed them—they had not found in it the rest they anticipated. They looked back to the Judaism they had left, and saw a splendid temple-service, a line of priests, a visible temple witnessing of God's presence, a religion which was unquestionably fertile in prophets and martyrs. They saw these pretensions and wavered.

But this was all on the eve of dissolution. The Jewish earth and heavens, *i. e.*, the Jewish Commonwealth and Church, were doomed and about to pass away. The writer of this epistle felt that their hour was come;* and if their religion rested on nothing better than this, he knew that in the crash religion itself would go. To return to Judaism was to go down to atheism and despair.

Reason alleged—they had contented themselves with a superficial view of Christianity; they had not seen how it was interwoven with all their own history, and how it alone explained that history.

Therefore in this epistle the writer labors to show that Christianity was the fulfillment of the *idea* latent in Judaism: that from the earliest times, and in every institution, it was implied. In the monarchy, in prophets, in sabbath-days, in psalms, in the priesthood, and in temple-services, Christianity lay concealed; and the dispensation of a Son was the realization of what else was shadow. He therefore alone who adhered to Christ was the true Jew, and to apostatize from Christianity was really to apostatize from true Judaism.

I am to show, then, that the manifestation of God through a Son was implied, not realized, in the earlier dispensation.

"Sundry portions" of this truth are instanced in the epistle. The mediatorial dispensation of Moses—the gift of Canaan—the Sabbath, etc. At present I select these:

I. The preparatory Dispensation.
II. The filial and final Dispensation.

I. It was implied, not fulfilled in the kingly office. Three

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* See chap. xii. 26, 27.

Psalms are quoted, all referring to kingship. In the 2d Psalm it was plain that a true idea of a king was only fulfilled in one who was a son of God. The Jewish king was king only so far as he held from God: as His image, the representative of the Fountain of law and majesty. To Him God hath said, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." The 45th Psalm is a bridal hymn, composed on the marriage of a Jewish king. Startling language is addressed to him. He is called God—Lord. "Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever." The bride is invited to worship him as it were a God: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." No one is surprised at this who remembers that Moses was said to be made a God to Aaron. Yet it is startling, almost blasphemous, unless there be a deeper meaning implied—the divine character of the real king.

In the 110th Psalm a new idea is added. The true king must be a priest. "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. This was addressed to the Jewish king; but it implied that the ideal king, of which he was for the time the representative, more or less truly, is one who at the same time sustains the highest religious character, and the highest executive authority.

Again, David was emphatically the type of the Jewish regal idea. David is scarcely a personage, so entirely does he pass in Jewish forms of thought into an ideal sovereign—"the sure mercies of David." David is the name, therefore, for the David which was to be. Now David was a wanderer, kingly still, ruling men and gaining adherents by force of inward royalty. Thus in the Jewish mind the kingly office disengaged itself from outward pomp and hereditary right as mere accidents, and became a personal reality. The king was an idea.

Further still. The epistle extends this idea to man. The psalm had ascribed (Ps. viii. 6) kingly qualities and rule to manhood—rule over the creation. Thus the idea of a king belonged properly to humanity; to the Jewish king as the representative of humanity.

Yet even in collective humanity the royal character is not realized. "We see not," says the epistle, "all things as yet put under him"—man.

Collect, then, these notions. The true king of men is a Son of God: one who is to his fellow-men, God and Lord, as the Jewish bride was to feel her royal husband to be to her—one who is a priest—one who may be poor and exiled, yet not less royal.

Say, then, whence is this idea fulfilled by Judaism? To which of the Jewish kings can it be applied, except with infinite exaggeration? To David? Why, the Redeemer shows the insuperable difficulty of this. "How then doth David in Spirit call him," *i. e.*, the king of whom he was writing, "Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my *Lord*, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?" David writing of himself, yet speaks there in the third person, projecting himself outward as an object of contemplation, an idea.

Is it fulfilled in the human race? "We see not yet all things put under him." Then the writer goes on: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." In Jesus of Nazareth alone all these fragments, these sundry portions of the revealed idea of royalty met.

II. Christianity was implied in the race of prophets.

The second class of quotations refer to the prophets' life and history (Heb. ii. 11–14; Psalm xxii. 22; Psalm xviii. 2; Isaiah xii. 2; Isaiah viii. 18). Remember what the prophets were. They were not merely predictors of the future. Nothing destroys the true conception of the prophets' office more than those popular books in which their mission is certified by curious coincidences. For example, if it is predicted that Babylon shall be a desolation, the haunt of wild beasts, etc., then some traveller has seen a lion standing on Birs Nimroud; or if the fisherman is to dry his nets on Tyre, simply expressing its destruction thereby, the commentator is not easy till he finds that a net has been actually seen drying on a rock. But this is to degrade the prophetic office to a level with Egyptian palmistry: to make the prophet like an astrologer, or a gypsy fortune-teller—one who can predict destinies and draw horoscopes. But, in truth, the first office of the prophet was with the present. He read eternal principles beneath the present and the transitory, and in doing this, of course, he prophesied the future; for a principle true to-day is true forever. But this was, so to speak, an accident of his office, not its essential feature. If, for instance, he read in the voluptuousness of Babylon the secret of Babylon's decay, he also read by anticipation the doom of Corinth, of London, of all cities in Babylon's state; or if Jerusalem's fall was predicted, in it all such judgment comings were foreseen; and the language is true of the fall of the world: as truly, or more so, than that of Jerusalem. A philosopher saying in the present tense the law by which comets move, predicts all possible cometary movements.

Now the prophet's life, almost more than his words, was predictive. The writer of this epistle lays down a great principle respecting the prophet: "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." It was the very condition of his inspiration that he should be one with the people. So far from making him superhuman, it made him *more* man. He felt with more exquisite sensitiveness all that belongs to man, else he could not have been a prophet. His insight into things was the result of that very weakness, sensitiveness, and susceptibility so tremblingly alive. He burned with their thoughts, and expressed them. He was obliged by the very sensitiveness of his humanity to have a more entire dependence and a more perfect sympathy than other men. The sanctifying prophet was one with those whom he sanctified. Hence he uses those expressions quoted from Isaiah and the Psalms above.

He was more man, just because more divine—more a son of man, because more a son of God. He was peculiarly the suffering Israelite: His countenance marred more than the sons of men. Hence we are told the prophets searched "what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Observe, it was a spirit *in* them, their own lives witnessing mysteriously of what the perfect Humanity must be suffering.

Thus, especially, the 53d chapter of Isaiah was spoken originally of the Jewish nation—of the prophet as peculiarly the Israelite; and it is no wonder the eunuch asked Philip in perplexity, "Of whom doth the prophet say this—of himself or some other man?" The truth is, he said it of himself, but prophetically of Humanity; true of him, most true of the highest Humanity. Here, then, was a new "portion" of the revelation. The prophet rebuked the king, often opposed the priest, but was one with the people. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

If, then, One had come claiming to be the Prophet of the race, and was a sufferer, claiming to be the Son of God, and yet peculiarly man; the son of man: the son of man just because the Son of God: more Divine, because more human: then this was only what the whole race of Jewish prophets should have prepared them for. God had spoken by the prophets. That God had now spoken by a Son in whom the idea of the true prophet was realized in its entireness

III. The priesthood continued this idea latent. The writer of this epistle saw three elements in the priestly idea: 1. That he should be ordained for men in things pertaining to God; 2. That he should offer gifts and sacrifices; 3. That he should be called by God, not be a mere self-asserter.

1. Ordained for men. Remark here the true idea contained in Judaism, and its difference from the heathen notions. In Heathenism the priest was of a different race—separate from his fellows. In Judaism he was ordained for men; their representative; constituted in their behalf. The Jewish priest represented the holiness of the nation; he went into the Holy of Holies, showing it. But this great idea was only implied, not fulfilled in the Jewish priest. He was only by a fiction the representative of holiness. Holy he was not. He only entered into a fictitious Holy of Holies. If the idea were to be ever real, it must be in One who should be actually what the Jewish priest was by a figment, and who should carry our humanity into the real Holy of Holies—the presence of God; thus becoming our Invisible and Eternal Priest.

Next it was implied that his call must be Divine. But in the 110th Psalm a higher call is intimated than that Divine call which was made to the Aaronic priesthood by a regular succession, or, as it is called in the epistle, "the law of a carnal commandment." Melchizedek's call is spoken of. The king is called a priest after his order. Not a derived or hereditary priesthood; not one transmissible, beginning and ending in himself (Heb. vii. 1–3), but a priesthood, in other words, of character, of inward right: a call internal, hence more Divine; or, as the writer calls it, a priest "after the power of an endless life." This was the idea for which the Jewish psalms themselves ought to have prepared the Jew.

Again, the priests offered gifts and sacrifices. Distinguish: Gifts were thank-offerings; first-fruits of harvest, vintage, etc., a man's best; testimonies of infinite gratefulness, and expressions of it. But sacrifices were different: they implied a sense of unworthiness: that sense which conflicts with the idea of any right to offer gifts.

Now the Jewish Scriptures themselves had explained this subject, and this instinctive feeling of unworthiness for which sacrifice found an expression. Prophets and psalmists had felt that no sacrifice was perfect which did not reach the conscience (Ps. li. 16, 17), for instance; also Heb. x. 8–12. No language could more clearly show that the spiritual Jew discerned that entire surrender to the Divine Will is the only perfect sacrifice, the ground of all sacrifices, and that which alone imparts to it a significance. Not the mere sacrifice of victims. . . . "Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." *That* is the sacrifice which God wills.

I say it firmly — all other notions of sacrifice are false. Whatsoever introduces the conception of vindictiveness or retaliation—whatever speaks of appeasing fury — whatever estimates the value of the Saviour's sacrifice by the "penalty paid"—whatever differs from these notions of sacrifice contained in psalms and prophets—is borrowed from the bloody shambles of Heathenism, and not from Jewish altars.

This alone makes the worshipper perfect as pertaining to the conscience. He who can offer it in its entireness, He alone is the world's Atonement; He in whose heart the Law was, and who alone of all mankind was content to do it, His sacrifice alone can be the sacrifice all-sufficient in the Father's sight as the proper sacrifice of humanity: He who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, He alone can give the Spirit which enables us to present *our* bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. He is the only High-priest of the universe.

XII.

WORLDLINESS.

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for-ever."—1 John ii. 15–17.

Religion differs from morality in the value which it places on the affections. Morality requires that an act be done on principle. Religion goes deeper, and inquires into the state of the heart. The Church of Ephesus was unsuspected in her orthodoxy, and unblemished in her zeal: but to the ear of him who saw the apocalyptic vision, a voice spake, 'I have somewhat against thee in that thou hast left thy first love."

In the eye of Christianity he is a Christian who loves the Father. He who loves the world may be in his way a good man, respecting whose eternal destiny we pronounce no opinion: but one of the children of the kingdom he is not.

Now the boundary-lines of this love of the world, or worldliness, are exceedingly difficult to define. Bigotry pronounces many things wrong which are harmless: laxity permits many which are by no means innocent: and it is a question perpetually put, a question miserably perplexing to those whose religion consists more in avoiding that which is wrong than in seeking that which is right, What is worldliness?

To that question we desire to find to-day an answer in the text; premising this, that our object is to put ourselves in possession of principles. For otherwise we shall only deal with this matter as empirics; condemning this and approving that by opinion, but on no certain and intelligible ground: we shall but float on the unstable sea of opinion.

We confine ourselves to two points.

I. The nature of the forbidden world.
II. The reason for which it is forbidden.

I. The nature of the forbidden world. The first idea suggested by "the world" is this green earth, with its days and nights, its seasons, its hills and its valleys, its clouds and brightness. This is not the world the love of which is prohibited; for to forbid the love of this would be to forbid the love of God.

There are three ways in which we learn to know Him. First, by the working of our minds: love, justice, tenderness. If we would know what they mean in God, we must gain the conception from their existence in ourselves. But inasmuch as humanity is imperfect in us, if we were to learn of God only from His image in ourselves, we should run the risk of calling the evil good, and the imperfect divine. Therefore He has given us, besides this, the representation of Himself in Christ, where is found the meeting-point of the Divine and the human, and in whose life the character of Deity is reflected as completely as the sun is seen in the depth of the still, untroubled lake.

But there is a third way in which we attain the idea of God. This world is but manifested Deity—God shown to eye, and ear, and sense. This strange phenomenon of a world, what is it? All we know of it—all we know of matter—is, that it is an assemblage of powers which produce in us certain sensations; but what those powers are in themselves we know not. The sensation of color, form, weight, we have; but what it is which gives those sensations—in the language of the schools, what is the substratum which supports the accidents or qualities of Being—we can not tell. Speculative Philosophy replies, It is but our own selves becoming conscious of themselves. We, in our own being, are the cause of all phenomena. Positive Philosophy replies, What the Being of the world is we can not tell, we only know what it seems to us. Phenomena—appearance—beyond this we can not reach. Being itself is—and forever must be, unknowable. Religion replies, That something is God. The world is but manifested Deity. That which lies beneath the surface of all appearance, the cause of all manifestation, is God. So that to forbid the love of all this world is to forbid the love of that by which God is known to us. The sounds and sights of this lovely world are but the drapery of the robe in which the Invisible has clothed Himself. Does a man ask what this world is, and why man is placed in it? It was that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world might be clearly seen. Have we ever stood beneath the solemn vault of heaven when the stars were looking down in their silent splendor, and not felt an overpowering sense of His eternity? When the white lightning has quivered in the sky, has that told us nothing of power, or only something of electricity? Rocks and mountains, are they here to give us the idea of material massiveness, or to reveal the conception of the Strength of Israel? When we take up the page of past history, and read that wrong never prospered long, but that nations have drunk one after another the cup of terrible retribution, can we dismiss all that as the philosophy of history, or shall we say that through blood, and war, and desolation we trace the footsteps of a presiding God, and find evidence that there sits at the helm of this world's affairs a strict, and rigorous, and most terrible justice? To the eye that can see, to the heart that is not paralyzed, God is here. The warnings which the Bible utters against the things of this world bring no charge against the glorious world itself. The world is the glass through which we see the Maker. But what men do is this: They put the dull quicksilver of their own selfishness behind the glass, and so it becomes not the transparent medium through which God shines, but the dead opaque which reflects back themselves. Instead of lying with open eye and heart to *receive*, we project ourselves upon the world and *give*. So it gives us back our own false feelings and nature. Therefore it brings forth thorns and thistles; therefore it grows weeds—weeds to us; therefore the lightning burns with wrath, and the thunder mutters vengeance. By all which it comes to pass that the very manifestation of God has transformed itself:—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and all that is in the world is no longer of the Father, but is of the world.

By the world again is sometimes meant the men that are in the world. And thus the command would run, Love not men, but love God. It has been so read. The Pharisees read it so of old. The property which natural affection demanded for the support of parents, upon that they wrote "Corban," a gift for God, and robbed men that they might give to God. Yet no less than this is done whenever human affection is called idolatry. As if God were jealous of our love in the human sense of jealousy; as if we could love God the more by loving man the less; as if it were not by loving our brother whom we have seen, that we approximate towards the love of God whom we have not seen. This is but the cloak for narrowness of heart. Men of withered affections excuse their lovelessness by talking largely of the affection due to God. Yet, like the Pharisees, the love on which Corban is written is never given to God, but really retained for self.

No, let a man love his neighbor as himself. Let him love his brother, sister, wife, with all the intensity of his heart's affection. This is not St. John's forbidden world.

By the world is often understood the worldly occupation, trade or profession which a man exercises. And accordingly, it is no uncommon thing to hear this spoken of as something which, if not actually anti-religious, is, so far as it goes, time taken away from the religious life. But when the man from whom the legion had been expelled asked Jesus for the precepts of a religious existence, the reply sent him back to home. His former worldliness had consisted in doing his worldly duties ill—his future religiousness was to consist in doing those same duties better. A man's profession or trade is not only not incompatible with religion (provided it be a lawful one), it *is* his religion. And this is true even of those callings which at first sight appear to have in them something hard to reconcile with religiousness. For instance, the profession of a lawyer. He is a worldling in it if he use it for some personal greed, or degrade it by chicanery. But in itself it is an occupation which sifts right from wrong; which, in the entangled web of human life, unwinds the meshes of error. He is by profession enlisted on the side of the right —directly connected with God, the central point of justice and truth. A nobler occupation need no man desire than to be a fellow-worker with God. Or take the soldier's trade—in this world generally a trade of blood, and revenge, and idle licentiousness. Rightly understood, what is it? A soldier's whole life, whether he will or not, is an enunciation of the greatest of religious truths, the voluntary sacrifice of one for the sake of many. In the detail of his existence, how abundant are the opportunities for the voluntary recognition of this. Opportunities such as that when the three strong men brake through the lines of the enemy to obtain the water for their sovereign's thirst—opportunities as when that same heroic sovereign poured the untasted water on the ground, and refused to drink because it was his soldiers' lives—he could not drink at such a price. Earnestness in a lawful calling is not worldliness. A profession is the sphere of our activity. There is something sacred in work. To work in the appointed sphere is to be religious—as religious as to pray. This is not the forbidden world.

Now to define what worldliness is. Remark, first, that it is determined by the *spirit* of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the "flesh," nor the "eye," nor "life," which are forbidden, but it is the "*lust* of the flesh," and the "*lust* of the eye," and the "*pride* of life." It is not this earth, nor the men who inhabit it, nor the sphere of our legitimate activity, that we may not love, but the way in which the love is given which constitutes worldliness. Look into this a little closer. The lust of the flesh. Here is affection for the outward: pleasure, that which affects the senses only: the flesh, that enjoyment which comes from the emotions of an hour, be it coarse or be it refined. The pleasure of wine or the pleasure of music, so far as it is only a movement of the flesh. Again, the lust of the eye. Here is affection for the transient, for the eye can only gaze on form and color—and these are things that do not last. Once more—the pride of life. Here is affection for the unreal. Men's opinion—the estimate which depends upon wealth, rank, circumstances.

Worldliness then consists in these three things: Attachment to the outward—attachment to the transitory—attachment to the unreal: in opposition to love for the inward, the eternal, the true: and the one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other. If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. But let a man once feel the power of the kingdom that is within, and then the love fades of that emotion whose life consists only in the thrill of a nerve, or the vivid sensation of a feeling: he loses his happiness, and wins his blessedness. Let a man get but one glimpse of the King in His beauty, and then the forms and shapes of things here are to him but the types of an invisible loveliness: types which he is content should break and fade. Let but a man feel truth—that goodness is greatness—that there is no other greatness—and then the degrading reverence with which the titled of this world bow before wealth, and the ostentation with which the rich of this world profess their familiarity with title: all the pride of life, what is it to him? The love of the inward—everlasting, real—the love, that is, of the Father, annihilates the love of the world.

II. We pass to the reasons for which the love of the world is forbidden.

The first reason assigned is, that the love of the world is incompatible with the love of God. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Now what we observe in this is, that St. John takes it for granted that we must love something. If not the love of the Father, then of necessity the love of the world. Love misplaced, or love rightly placed—you have your choice between these two: you have not your choice between loving God or nothing. No man is sufficient for himself. Every man must go out of himself for enjoyment. Something in this universe besides himself there must be to bind the affections of every man. There is that within us which compels us to attach ourselves to something outward. The choice is not this: love, or be without love. You can not give the pent-up steam its choice of moving or not moving. It must move one way or the other: the right way or the wrong way. Direct it rightly, and its energy rolls the engine-wheels smoothly on their track: block up its passage, and it bounds away, a thing of madness and ruin. Stop it you can not; it will rather burst. So it is with our hearts. There is a pent-up energy of love, gigantic for good or evil. Its right way is in the direction of our Eternal Father; and then, let it boil and pant as it will, the course of the man is smooth. Expel the love of God from the bosom—what then? Will the passion that is within cease to burn? Nay. Tie the man down—let there be no outlet for his affections—let him attach himself to nothing, and become a loveless spirit in this universe, and then there is what we call a broken heart: the steam bursts the machinery that contains it. Or else let him take his course, unfettered and free, and then we have the riot of worldliness —a man with strong affections thrown off the line, tearing himself to pieces, and carrying desolation along with him. Let us comprehend our own nature, ourselves, and our destinies. God is our rest, the only one that can quench the fever of our desire. God in Christ is what we want. When men quit that, so that "the love of the Father is not in them," then they must perforce turn aside: the nobler heart to break with disappointment—the meaner heart to love the world instead, and sate and satisfy itself, as best it may, on things that perish in the using. Herein lies the secret of our being, in this world of the affections. This explains why our noblest feelings lie so close to our basest—why the noblest so easily metamorphose themselves into the basest. The heart which was made large enough for God wastes itself upon the world.

The second reason which the apostle gives for not squandering affection on the world is its transitoriness. Now this transitoriness exists in two shapes. It is transitory in itself —the world passeth away. It is transitory in its power of exciting desire—the lust thereof passeth away.

It is a twice-told tale that the world is passing away from us, and there is very little new to be said on the subject. God has written it on every page of His creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change. The friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. Our very selves are altering. The basis of our being may remain, but our views, tastes, feelings are no more our former self than the oak is the acorn. The very face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the gray mouldering ruins to tell of what was once. Our laborers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth—skeletons of men, to whom life once was dear—urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. To-day the shot of the enemy defaces and blackens monuments and venerable temples which remind the Christian that into the deep silence of eternity the Roman world, which was in its vigor in the days of John, has passed away. And so things are going. It is a work of weaving and unweaving. All passes. Names that the world heard once in thunder are scarcely heard at the end of centuries: good or bad, they pass. A few years ago, and *we* were not. A few centuries farther, and we reach the age of beings of almost another race. Nimrod was the conqueror and scourge of his far-back age. Tubal Cain gave to the world the iron which was the foundation of every triumph of men over nature. We have their names now. But the philologist is uncertain whether the name of the first is real or mythical, and the traveller excavates the sand-mounds of Nineveh to wonder over the records which he can not decipher. Tyrant and benefactor, both are gone. And so all things are moving on to the last fire which shall wrap the world in conflagration, and make all that has been the recollection of a dream. This is the history of the world, and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. Like as when you watch the melting tints of the evening sky—purple-crimson, gorgeous gold, a few pulsations of quivering light, and it is all gone: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of."

The other aspect of this transitoriness is, that the lust of the world passeth away. By which the apostle seems to remind us of that solemn truth that, fast as the world is fleeting from us, faster still does the taste for its enjoyments fleet; fast as the brilliancy fades from earthly things, faster still does the eye become wearied of straining itself upon them.

Now there is one way in which this takes place—by a man becoming satiated with the world. There is something in earthly rapture which cloys. And when we drink deep of pleasure, there is left behind something of that loathing which follows a repast on sweets. When a boy sets out in life, it is all fresh—freshness in feeling—zest in his enjoyment—purity in his heart. Cherish that, my young brethren, while you can; lose it, and it never comes again. It is not an easy thing to cherish it, for it demands restraint in pleasure, and no young heart loves that. Religion has only calm, sober, perhaps monotonous pleasures to offer at first. The deep rapture of enjoyment comes in after-life. And that will not satisfy the young heart. Men will know what pleasure is, and they drink deep. Keen delight—feverish enjoyment—that is what you long for: and these emotions lose their delicacy and their relish, and will only come at the bidding of gross excitements. The ecstasy which once rose to the sight of the rainbow in the sky, or the bright brook, or the fresh morning, comes languidly at last only in the crowded midnight room, or the excitement of commercial speculation, or beside the gaming-table, or amidst the fever of politics. It is a spectacle for men and angels, when a man has become old in feeling and worn-out before his time. Know we none such among our own acquaintance? Have the young never seen those aged ones who stand amongst them in their pleasures, almost as if to warn them of what they themselves must come to at last? Have they never marked the dull and sated look that they cast upon the whole scene, as upon a thing which they would fain enjoy and can not? Know you what you have been looking on? A sated worldling—one to whom pleasure was rapture once, as it is to you now. Thirty years more, that look and that place will be yours: and that is the way the world rewards its veterans; it chains them to it after the "lust of the world" has passed away.

Or this may be done by a discovery of the unsatisfactori ness of the world. That is a discovery not made by every man. But there are some at least who have learned it bitterly, and that without the aid of Christ. Some there are who would not live over this past life again even if it were possible. Some there are who would gladly have done with the whole thing at once, and exchange—oh! how joyfully—the garment for the shroud. And some there are who cling to life, not because life is dear, but because the future is dark, and they tremble somewhat at the thought of entering it. Clinging to life is no proof that a man is still longing for the world. We often cling to life the more tenaciously as years go on. The deeper the tree has struck its roots into the ground, the less willing is it to be rooted up. But there is many a one who so hangs on just because he has not the desperate hardihood to quit it, nor faith enough to be "willing to depart." The world and he have understood each other; he has seen through it; he has ceased to hope any thing from it. The love of the Father is not in him, but "the lust of the world" has passed away.

Lastly, a reason for unlearning the love of the world is the solitary permanence of Christian action. In contrast with the fleetingness of this world, the apostle tells us of the stability of labor. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." And let us mark this. Christian life is action: not a speculating, not a debating, but a doing. One thing, and only one, in this world has eternity stamped upon it. Feelings pass; resolves and thoughts pass; opinions change. What you have done lasts—lasts in you. Through ages, through eternity, what you have done for Christ, that, and only that, you are. "They rest from their labors," saith the Spirit, "and their works do follow them." If the love of the Father be in us, where is the thing done which we have to show? You think justly—feel rightly—yes—but your work?—produce it. Men of wealth, men of talent, men of leisure, what are you *doing* in God's world for God?

Observe, however, to distinguish between the act and the actor: It is not the thing done, but the doer who lasts. The thing done often is a failure. The cup given in the name of Christ may be given to one unworthy of it; but think ye that the love with which it was given has passed away? Has it not printed itself indelibly in the character by the very act of giving? Bless, and if the Son of peace be there, your act succeeds; but if not, your blessing shall return unto you again. In other words, the act may fail, but the doer of it abideth forever.

We close this subject with two practical truths. Let us learn from earthly changefulness a lesson of cheerful activity. The world has its way of looking at all this, but it is not the Christian's way. There has been nothing said today that a worldly moralist has not already said a thousand times far better. The fact is a world-fact. The application is a Christian one. Every man can be eloquent about the nothingness of time. But the application! "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?" That is one application. Let us sentimentalize and be sad in this fleeting world, and talk of the instability of human greatness, and the transitoriness of human affection? Those are the only two applications the world knows. They shut out the recollection and are merry, or they dwell on it and are sad. Christian brethren, dwell on it and be happy. This world is not yours; thank God it is not. It is dropping away from you like worn-out autumn leaves; but beneath it, hidden in it, there is another world lying as the flower lies in the bud. That is *your* world, which must burst forth at last into eternal luxuriance. All you stand on, see, and love, is but the husk of something better. Things are passing; our friends are dropping off from us; strength is giving way; our relish for earth is going, and the world no longer wears to our hearts the radiance that once it wore. We have the same sky above us, and the same scenes around us; but the freshness that our hearts extracted from every thing in boyhood, and the glory that seemed to rest once on earth and life have faded away forever. Sad and gloomy truths to the man who is going down to the grave with his work undone. Not sad to the Christian, but rousing, exciting, invigorating. If it be the eleventh hour, we have no time for folding of the hands: we will work the faster. Through the changefulness of life —through the solemn tolling of the bell of Time, which tells us that another, and another, and another, are gone before us—through the noiseless rush of a world which is going down with gigantic footsteps into nothingness. Let not the Christian slack his hand from work, for he that doeth the will of God may defy hell itself to quench his immortality.

Finally, The love of this world is only unlearned by the love of the Father. It were a desolate thing, indeed, to forbid the love of earth, if there were nothing to fill the vacant space in the heart. But it is just for this purpose, that a sublimer affection may find room, that the lower is to be expelled. And there is only one way in which that higher love is learned. The cross of Christ is the measure of the love of God to us, and the measure of the meaning of man's existence.

The measure is the love of God. Through the death-knell of a passing universe God seems at least to speak to us in wrath. There is no doubt of what God means in the Cross. He means love. The measure of the meaning of man's existence. Measure all by the Cross. Do you want success? The Cross is failure. Do you want a name? The Cross is infamy. Is it to be gay and happy that you live? The Cross is pain and sharpness. Do you live that the will of God may be done—in you and by you, in life and death? Then, and only then, the Spirit of the Cross is in you. When once a man has learned that, the power of the world is gone; and no man need bid him, in denunciation or in invitation, not to love the world. He can not love the world, for he has got an ambition above the world. He has planted his foot upon the Rock, and when all else is gone, he at least abides forever.

XIII.

THE SYDENHAM PALACE, AND THE RELIGIOUS NON-OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."—Rom. xiv. 5, 6.

The selection of this text is suggested by one of the current topics of the day. Lately projects have been devised, one of which in importance surpasses all the rest, for providing places of public recreation for the people: and it has been announced, with the sanction of government, that such a place will be held open during a part at least of the day of rest. By a large section of sincerely religious persons this announcement has been received with considerable alarm and strenuous opposition. It has seemed to them that such a desecration would be a national crime: for, holding the sabbath to be God's sign between Himself and His people, they can not but view the desecration of the sign as a forfeiture of His covenant, and an act which will assuredly call down national judgments. By the secular press, on the contrary, this proposal has been defended with considerable power. It has been maintained that the sabbath is a Jewish institution; in its strictness, at all events, not binding on a Christian community. It has been urged with much force that we can not consistently refuse to concede to the poor man publicly, that right of recreation which privately the rich man has long taken without rebuke, and with no protest on the part of the ministers of Christ. And it has been said that such places of recreation will tend to humanize, which if not identical with Christianizing the population, is at least a step towards it.

Upon such a subject, where truth unquestionably does not lie upon the surface, it can not be out of place if a minister of Christ endeavors to direct the minds of his congregation towards the formation of an opinion; not dogmatically, but humbly, remembering always that his own temptation is, from his very position as a clergyman, to view such matters, not so much in the broad light of the possibilities of actual life, as with the eyes of a recluse; from a clerical and ecclesiastical, rather than from a large and human point of view. For no minister of Christ has a right to speak oracularly. All that he can pretend to do is to give his judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. And on large national subjects there is perhaps no class so ill qualified to form a judgment with breadth as we, the clergy of the Church of England, accustomed as we are to move in the narrow circle of those who listen to us with forbearance and deference, and mixing but little in real life, till in our cloistered and inviolable sanctuaries we are apt to forget that it is one thing to lay down rules for a religious clique, and another to legislate for a great nation.

In the Church of Rome a controversy had arisen in the time of St. Paul, respecting the exact relation in which Christianity stood to Judaism; and, consequently, the obligation of various Jewish institutions came to be discussed: among the rest the sabbath-day. One party maintained its abrogation, another its continued obligation. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike." Now it is remarkable that, in his reply, the Apostle Paul, although his own views upon the question were decided and strong, passes no judgment of censure upon the practice of either of these parties, but only blames the uncharitable spirit in which the one "judged their brethren" as irreligious, and the other "set at naught" their stricter brethren as superstitious. He lays down, however, two principles for the decision of the matter: the first being the rights of Christian conviction, or the sacredness of the individual conscience—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" the second, a principle unsatisfactory enough, and surprising, no doubt, to both, that there is such a thing as religious observance, and also such a thing as a religious non-observance of the day—"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." I shall consider,

I. St. Paul's own view upon the question.
II. His modifications of that view, in reference to separate cases.

I. St. Paul's own view. No one, I believe, who would read St. Paul's own writings with unprejudiced mind could fail to come to the conclusion that he considered the sabbath abrogated by Christianity: not merely as modified in its stringency, but as totally repealed.

For example, see Colossians ii. 16, 17: observe, he counts the sabbath-day among those institutions of Judaism which were shadows, and of which Christ was the realization, the substance or "body;" and he bids the Colossians remain indifferent to the judgment which would be pronounced upon their non-observance of such days. "Let no man judge you with respect to . . . . the sabbath-days."

He is more decisive still in the text. For it has been contended that in the former passage, "sabbath-days" refers simply to the Jewish sabbaths, which were superseded by the Lord's day, and that the apostle does not allude at all to the new institution, which it is supposed had superseded it. Here, however, there can be no such ambiguity. "One man esteemeth *every* day alike;" and he only says, "let him be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Every" day must include first days as well as last days of the week: Sundays as well as Saturdays. And again, he even speaks of scrupulous adherence to particular days, as if it were giving up the very principle of Christianity: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." So that his objection was not to Jewish days, but to the very principle of attaching intrinsic sacredness to any days. All forms and modes of particularizing the Christian life he reckoned as bondage under the elements or alphabet of the law. And this is plain from the nature of the case. He struck not at a day, but at a principle. Else, if with all this vehemence and earnestness, he only meant to establish a new set of days in the place of the old, there is no intelligible principle for which he is contending, and that earnest apostle is only a champion for one day instead of another—an asserter of the eternal sanctities of Sunday, instead of the eternal sanctities of Saturday. Incredible indeed.

Let us then understand the principle on which he declared the repeal of the sabbath. He taught that the blood of Christ cleansed *all* things; therefore there was nothing *specially* clean. Christ had vindicated all for God; therefore there was no one thing more God's than another. For to assert one thing as God's more than another, is by implication to admit that other to be less God's.

The blood of Christ had vindicated God's parental right to all humanity; therefore there could be no peculiar people. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." It had proclaimed God's property in all places; therefore there could be no one place intrinsically holier than another. No human dedication, no human consecration could localize God in space. Hence the first martyr quoted from the prophet: "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build for me? saith the Lord."

Lastly, the Gospel of Christ had sanctified all time: hence no time could be specially God's. For to assert that Sunday is more God's day than Monday, is to maintain by implication Monday is His less rightfully.

Here, however, let it be observed, it is perfectly possible, and not at all inconsistent with this, that for human convenience, and even human necessities, just as it became desirable to set apart certain places in which the noise of earthly business should not be heard for spiritual worship, so it should become desirable to set apart certain days for special worship. But then all such were defensible on the ground of wise and Christian expediency alone. They could not be placed on the ground of a Divine statute or command. They rested on the authority of the Church of Christ; and the power which had made could unmake them again.

Accordingly in early, we can not say exactly how early times, the Church of Christ felt the necessity of substituting something in place of the ordinances which had been repealed. And the Lord's day arose: not a day of compulsory rest; not such a day at all as modern sabbatarians suppose; not a Jewish sabbath; rather a day in many respects absolutely contrasted with the Jewish sabbath.

For the Lord's day sprung, not out of a transference of the Jewish sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, but rather out of the idea of making the week an imitation of the life of Christ. With the early Christians, the great conception was that of following their crucified and risen Lord: they set, as it were, the clock of Time to the epochs of his history. Friday represented the Death in which all Christians daily die, and Sunday the Resurrection in which all Christians daily rise to higher life. What Friday and Sunday were to the week, that Good Friday and Easter Sunday were to the year. And thus, in larger or smaller cycles, all time represented to the early Christians the mysteries of the Cross and the Risen Life hidden in humanity. And as the sunflower turns from morning till evening to the sun, so did the early Church turn forever to her Lord, transforming week and year into a symbolical representation of His spiritual life.

Carefully distinguish this, the true historical view of the origin of the Lord's day, from a mere transference of a Jewish sabbath from one day to another. For St. Paul's teaching is distinct and clear, that the sabbath is annulled, and to urge the observance of the day as indispensable to salvation was, according to him, to Judaize: "to turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they desired to be in bondage."

II. The modifications of this view.

1. The first modification has reference to those who conscientiously observed the day. He that observeth the day, observeth it to the Lord. Let him act, then, on that conviction: "Let him be fully persuaded in his own mind." There is therefore a religious *observance* of the sabbath-day possible.

We are bound by the spirit of the fourth commandment, so far as we are in the same spiritual state as they to whom it was given. The spiritual intent of Christianity is to worship God every day in the spirit. But had this law been given in all its purity to the Jews, instead of turning every week-day into a sabbath, they would have transformed every sabbath into a week-day: with no special day fixed for worship, they would have spent every day without worship. Their hearts were too dull for a devotion so spiritual and pure. Therefore a law was given, specializing a day, in order to lead them to the broader truth that every day is God's.

Now, so far as we are in the Jewish state, the fourth commandment, even in its rigor and strictness, is wisely used by us; nay, we might say, indispensable. For who is he who needs not the day? He is the man so rich in love, so conformed to the mind of Christ, so elevated into the sublime repose of heaven, that he needs no carnal ordinances at all, nor the assistance of one day in seven to kindle spiritual feelings, seeing he is, as it were, all his life in heaven already.

And doubtless, such the Apostle Paul expected the Church of Christ to be. Anticipating the Second Advent at once; not knowing the long centuries of slow progress that were to come, his heart would have sunk within him could he have been told that at the end of eighteen centuries the Christian Church would be still observing days, and months, and times, and years, and still more, needing them.

Needing them, I say. For the sabbath was made for man. God made it for men in a certain spiritual state, because they needed it. The need therefore is deeply hidden in human nature. He who can dispense with it must be holy and spiritual indeed. And he who, still unholy and unspiritual, would yet dispense with it, is a man who would fain be wiser than his Maker. We, Christians as we are, still need the law: both in its restraints, and in its aids to our weakness.

No man, therefore, who knows himself, but will gladly and joyfully use the institution. No man who knows the need of his brethren will wantonly desecrate it, or recklessly hurt even their scruples respecting its observance. And no such man can look with aught but grave and serious apprehensions on such an innovation upon English customs of life and thought, as the proposal to give public and official countenance to a scheme which will *invite* millions, I do not say to an irreligious, but certainly an unreligious use of the day of rest.

This then is the first modification of the broad view of a repealed sabbath. Repealed though it be, there is such a thing as a religious observance of it. And provided that those who are stricter than we in their views of its obligation, observe it not from superstition, nor in abridgment of Christian liberty, nor from moroseness, we are bound in Christian charity to yield them all respect and honor. Let them act out their conscientious convictions. Let not him that observeth not despise him that observeth.

The second modification of the broad view is, that there is such a thing as a *religious non-observance* of the sabbath. I lay a stress on the word religious. For St. Paul does not say that every non-observance of the sabbath is religious, but that he who not observing it, observeth it not to the Lord, is, because acting on conscientious conviction, as acceptable as the others, who, in obedience to what they believe to be His will, observe it.

He pays his non-observance to the Lord, who feeling that Christ has made him free, striving to live all his days in the spirit, and knowing that that which is displeasing to God is not work nor recreation, but selfishness and worldliness, refuses to be bound by a Jewish ordinance which forbade labor and recreation, only with a typical intent.

But he who, not trying to serve God on any day, gives Sunday to toil or pleasure, certainly observes not the day: but his non-observance is not rendered to the Lord. He may be free from superstition: but it is not Christ who has made him free. Nor is he one of whom St. Paul would have said that his liberty on the sabbath is as acceptable as his brother's conscientious scrupulosity.

Here, then, we are at issue with the popular defense of public recreations on the sabbath-day: not so much with respect to the practice, as with respect to the grounds on which the practice is approved. They claim liberty: but it is not Christian liberty. Like St. Paul, they demand a license for non-observance; only, it is not "non-observance to the Lord." For distinguish well. The abolition of Judaism is not necessarily the establishment of Christianity: to do away with the sabbath-day in order to substitute a nobler, truer, more continuous sabbath, even the sabbath of all time given up to God, is well; but to do away with the special rights of God to the sabbath, in order merely to substitute the rights of pleasure, or the rights of mammon, or even the license of profligacy and drunkenness, that, methinks, is not St. Paul's "Christian liberty!"

The second point on which we join issue is the assumption that public places of recreation, which humanize, will therefore Christianize the people. It is taken for granted that architecture, sculpture, and the wonders of nature and art which such buildings will contain, have a direct or indirect tendency to lead to true devotion.

Only in a very limited degree is there truth in this at all. Christianity will humanize: we are not so sure that humanizing will Christianize. Let us be clear upon this matter. Esthetics are not religion. It is one thing to civilize and polish: it is another thing to Christianize. The worship of the beautiful is not the worship of holiness; nay, I know not whether the one may not have a tendency to disincline from the other.

At least, such was the history of ancient Greece. Greece was the home of the arts, the sacred ground on which the worship of the beautiful was carried to its perfection. Let those who have read the history of her decline and fall, who have perused the debasing works of her later years, tell us how music, painting, poetry, the arts, softened and debilitated and sensualized the nation's heart. Let them tell us how, when Greece's last and greatest man was warning in vain against the foe at her gates, and demanding a manlier and a more heroic disposition to sacrifice, that most polished and humanized people, sunk in trade and sunk in pleasure, were squandering enormous sums upon their buildings and their esthetics, their processions and their people's palaces, till the flood came, and the liberties of Greece were trampled down forever beneath the feet of the Macedonian conqueror.

No! the change of a nation's heart is not to be effected by the infusion of a taste for artistic grace. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Not art, but the cross of Christ. Simpler manners, purer lives: more self-denial; more earnest sympathy with the classes that lie below us; nothing short of that can lay the foundations of the Christianity which is to be hereafter, deep and broad.

On the other hand, we dissent from the views of those who would arrest such a project by petitions to the legislature on these grounds:

1. It is a return backward to Judaism and law. It may be quite true that, as we suspect, such non-observance of the day is not to the Lord; but only a scheme of mere pecuniary speculation. Nevertheless there is such a thing as a religious non-observance of the day: and we dare not "judge another man's servant: to his own master he standeth or falleth." We dare not assert the perpetual obligation of the sabbath, when an inspired apostle has declared it abrogated. We dare not refuse a public concession of that kind of recreation to the poor man which the rich have long not hesitated to take in their sumptuous mansions and pleasure-grounds, unrebuked by the ministers of Christ, who seem touched to the quick only when the desecration of the sabbath is loud and vulgar. We can not substitute a statute law for a repealed law of God. We may think, and we do, that there is much which may lead to dangerous consequences in this innovation: but we dare not treat it as a crime.

2. The second ground on which we are opposed to the ultra-rigor of sabbath observance, especially when it becomes coercive, is the danger of injuring the conscience. It is wisely taught by St. Paul that he who does any thing with offense, *i. e.*, with a feeling that it is wrong, does wrong. To him it is wrong, even though it be not wrong abstractly. Therefore it is always dangerous to multiply restrictions and

requirements beyond what is essential, because men feeling themselves hemmed in break the artificial barrier, but breaking it with a sense of guilt, do thereby become hardened in conscience and prepared for transgression against commandments which are divine and of eternal obligation. Hence it is that the criminal has so often in his confessions traced his deterioration in crime to the first step of breaking the sabbath-day, and no doubt with accurate truth. But what shall we infer from this? Shall we infer, as is so often done upon the platform and in religious books, that it proves the everlasting obligation of the sabbath? Or shall we, with a far truer philosophy of the human soul, infer, in the language of St. Peter, that we have been laying on him "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?"—in the language of St. Paul, that "the motions of sin were by the law," that the rigorous rule was itself the stimulating, moving cause of the sin: and that when the young man, worn out with his week's toil, first stole out into the fields to taste the fresh breath of a spring day, he did it with a vague, secret sense of transgression, and that having, as it were, drawn his sword in defiance against the established code of the religious world, he felt that from thenceforward there was for him no return, and so he became an outcast, his sword against every man, and every man's sword against him? I believe this to be the true account of the matter; and believing it, I can not but believe that the false Jewish notions of the sabbath-day which are prevalent have been exceedingly pernicious to the morals of the country.

Lastly, I remind you of the danger of mistaking a "positive" law for a moral one. The danger is that proportionably to the vehemence with which the law positive is enforced, the sacredness of moral laws is neglected. A positive law, in theological language, is a law laid down for special purposes, and corresponds with statute laws in things civil. Thus laws of quarantine and laws of excise depend for their force upon the will of the legislature, and when repealed are binding no more. But a moral law is one binding forever, which a statute law may declare, but can neither make nor unmake.

Now when men are rigorous in the enforcement and reverence paid to laws positive, the tendency is to a corresponding indifference to the laws of eternal right. The written supersedes in their hearts the moral. The mental history of the ancient Pharisees who observed the sabbath, and tithed mint, anise, and cummin, neglecting justice, mercy, and truth, is the history of a most dangerous but universal tendency of the human heart. And so, many a man whose heart swells with what he thinks pious horror when he sees the letter delivered or the train run upon the sabbath-day, can pass through the streets at night, undepressed and unshocked by the evidences of the wide-spreading profligacy which has eaten deep into his country's heart. And many a man who would gaze upon the domes of a Crystal Palace, rising above the trees, with somewhat of the same feeling with which he would look on a temple dedicated to Juggernaut, and who would fancy that something of the spirit of an ancient prophet was burning in his bosom, when his lips pronounced the woe! woe! of a coming doom, would sit calmly in a social circle of English life, and scarcely feel uneasy in listening to its uncharitableness and its slanders: would hear without one throb of indignation the common dastardly condemnation of the weak for sins which are venial in the strong: would survey the relations of the rich and poor in this country, and remain calmly satisfied that there is nothing false in them, unbrotherly and wrong. No, my brethren! let us think clearly and strongly on this matter. It may be that God has a controversy with this people. It may be, as they say, that our Father will chasten us by the sword of the foreigner. But if He does, and if judgments are in store for our country, they will fall—not because the correspondence of the land is carried on upon the sabbath-day: nor because Sunday trains are not arrested by the legislature: nor because a public permission is given to the working classes for a few hours' recreation on the day of rest—but because we are selfish men: and because we prefer pleasure to duty, and traffic to honor; and because we love our party more than our Church, and our Church more than our Christianity; and our Christianity more than truth, and ourselves more than all. These are the things that defile a nation: but the labor and the recreation of its poor, these are not the things that defile a nation

XIV.

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."—Luke ii. 40.

The ecclesiastical year begins with Advent, then comes Christmas-day. The first day of the natural year begins with the infancy of the Son of Man. To-day the Gospel proceeds with the brief account of the early years of Jesus.

The infinite significance of the life of Christ is not exhausted by saying that He was a perfect man. The notion of the earlier Socinians that He was a pattern man (ψίλος ἄνθρωπος), commissioned from Heaven with a message to teach men how to live, and supernaturally empowered to live in that perfect way Himself, is immeasurably short of truth. For perfection merely human does not attract; rather it repels. It may be copied in form: it can not be imitated in spirit—for men only imitate that from which enthusiasm and life are caught—for it does not inspire nor fire with love.

Faultless men and pattern children—you may admire them, but you admire coldly. Praise them as you will, no one is better for their example. No one blames them, and no one loves them: they kindle no enthusiasm; they create no likeness of themselves: they never reproduce themselves in other lives—the true prerogative of all original life.

If Christ had been only a faultless being, He would never have set up in the world a new type of character which at the end of two thousand years is fresh and life-giving and inspiring still. He never would have regenerated the world. He never would have "drawn all men unto Him," by being lifted up a self-sacrifice, making self-devotion beautiful. In Christ the divine and human blended: immutability joined itself to mutability. There was in Him the divine which remained fixed; the human which was constantly developing. One uniform idea and purpose characterized His whole life, with a divine immutable unity throughout, but it was subject to the laws of human growth. For the soul of Christ was not cast down upon this world a perfect thing at once. Spotless?—yes. Faultless?—yes. Tempted, yet in all points without sin?—yes. But perfection is more than faultlessness. All Scripture coincides in telling us that the ripe perfection of His manhood was reached step by step. There was a power and a life within Him which were to be developed, which could only be developed, like all human strength and goodness, by toil of brain and heart. Life up-hill all the way: and every foot-print by which He climbed left behind for us, petrified on the hard rock, and indurated into history forever, to show us when, and where, and how He toiled and won.

Take a few passages to prove that His perfection was gained by degrees. "It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation *perfect* through suffering." Again, "Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be *perfected*." "Though He were a Son, yet *learned* He obedience." And in the context, "Jesus *increased*. . . ."

Now see the result of this aspect of His perfectibility. In that changeless element of His being which beneath all the varying phases of growth remained divinely faultless, we see that which we can adore. In the ever-changing, ever-growing, subject therefore to feebleness and endearing mutability, we see that which brings Him near to us: makes Him lovable, at the same time that it interprets us to ourselves.

Our subject is the early development of Jesus. In this text we read of a threefold growth.

I. In strength.
II. In wisdom.
III. In grace.

First, it speaks to us simply of his early development, "The child grew."

In the case of all rare excellence that is merely human, it is the first object of the biographer of a marvellous man to seek for surprising stories of his early life. The appetite for the marvellous in this matter is almost instinctive and invariable. Almost all men love to discover the early wonders which were prophetic of after-greatness. Apparently the reason is that we are unwilling to believe that wondrous excellence was attained by slow, patient labor. We get an excuse for our own slowness and stunted growth, by settling it once for all, that the *original* differences between such men and us were immeasurable. Therefore it is, I conceive, that we seek so eagerly for anecdotes of early precocity.

In this spirit the fathers of the primitive Church collected legends of the early life of Christ, stories of superhuman infancy: what the infant and the child said and did. Many of these legends are absurd: all, as resting on no authority, are rejected.

Very different from this is the spirit of the Bible narrative. It records no marvellous stories of infantine sagacity or miraculous power, to feed a prurient curiosity. Both in what it tells and in what it does not tell, one thing is plain, that the human life of the Son of God was *natural.* There was first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn. In what it does *not* say: because, had there been any thing preternatural to record, no doubt it would have been recorded. In what it *does* say: because that little is all unaffectedly simple. One anecdote, and two verses of general description, that is all which is told us of the Redeemer's childhood.

The Child, it is written, grew. Two pregnant facts. He was a child, and a child that grew in heart, in intellect, in size, in grace, in favor with God. Not a man in child's years. No hotbed precocity marked the holiest of infancies. The Son of Man grew up in the quiet valley of existence—in shadow, not in sunshine, not *forced.* No unnatural, stimulating culture had developed the mind or feelings: no public flattery: no sunning of His infantine perfections in the glare of the world's show, had brought the temptation of the wilderness, with which His manhood grappled, too early on His soul. We know that He was childlike as other children: for in after years His brethren thought His fame strange, and His townsmen rejected Him. They could not believe that one who had gone in and out, ate and drank and worked among them, was He whose name is Wonderful. The proverb, true of others, was true of Him: "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." You know Him in a *picture* at once, by the halo round His brow. There was no glory in His real life to mark Him. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not. Gradually and gently He woke to consciousness of life and its manifold meaning; found Himself in possession of a self; by degrees opened His eyes upon this outer world, and drank in its beauty. Early He felt the lily of the field discourse to Him of the Invisible Loveliness, and the ravens tell of God His Father. Gradually and not at once, He embraced the sphere of human duties, and He woke to His earthly relationships one by one—the son—the brother—the citizen—the master.

It is a very deep and beautiful and precious truth that the Eternal Son had a human and progressive childhood. Happy the child who is suffered to be and content to be what God meant it to be—a child while childhood lasts. Happy the parent who does not force artificial manners, precocious feeling, premature religion. Our age is one of stimulus and high pressure. We live, as it were, our lives out fast. Effect is every thing. We require results produced at once: something to show and something that may *tell.* The folio of patient years is replaced by the pamphlet that stirs men's curiosity to-day, and to-morrow is forgotten. "Plain living and high thinking are no more." The town, with its fever and its excitements, and its collision of mind with mind, has spread over the country: and there is no country, scarcely home. To men who traverse England in a few hours and spend only a portion of the year in one place, home is becoming a vocable of past ages.

The result is, that heart and brain, which were given to last for seventy years, wear out before their time. We have our exhausted men of twenty-five, and our old men of forty. Heart and brain give way· the heart hardens and the brain grows soft.

Brethren! the Son of God lived till thirty in an obscure village of Judea, unknown: then came forth a matured and perfect man—with mind, and heart, and frame in perfect balance of humanity. It is a Divine lesson! I would I could say as strongly as I feel deeply. Our stimulating artificial culture destroys depth. Our competition, our nights turned into days by pleasure, leave no time for earnestness. We are superficial men. Character in the world wants *root.* England has gained much: she has lost also much. The world wants what has passed away, and which until we secure, we shall remain the clever shallow men we are: a childhood and a youth spent in the shade—a home.

Now this growth of Jesus took place in three particulars.

I. In spiritual strength. "The child waxed strong in spirit." Spiritual strength consists of two things—power of will, and power of self-restraint. It requires two things, therefore, for its existence—strong feelings and strong command over them.

Now it is here we make a great mistake: we mistake strong feelings for strong character. A man who bears all before him—before whose frown domestics tremble, and whose bursts of fury make the children of the house quake—because he has his will obeyed and his own way in all things we call him a strong man. The truth is, *that* is the weak man; it is his passions that are strong: he, mastered by them, is weak. You must measure the strength of a man by the power of the feelings which he subdues, not by the power of those which subdue him.

And hence composure is very often the highest result of strength. Did we never see a man receive a flagrant insult, and only grow a little pale, and then reply quietly? That was a man spiritually strong. Or did we never see a man in anguish stand as if carved out of solid rock, mastering himself? or one bearing a hopeless daily trial remain silent, and never tell the world what it was that cankered his home-peace? That is strength. He who with strong passions remains chaste: he who, keenly sensitive, with manly power of indignation in him, can be provoked and yet refrain himself, and forgive—these are strong men, spiritual heroes.

The Child *waxed* strong. Spiritual strength is reached by successive steps; fresh strength is got by every mastery of self. It is the belief of the savage that the spirit of every enemy he slays enters into him and becomes added to his own, accumulating a warrior's strength for the day of battle: therefore he slays all he can. It is true in the spiritual warfare. Every sin you slay—the spirit of that sin passes into you transformed into strength: every passion, not merely kept in abeyance by asceticism, but subdued by a higher impulse, is so much character strengthened. The strength of the passion not expended is yours still. Understand then, you are not a man of spiritual power because your impulses are irresistible. They sweep over your soul like a tornado—lay all flat before them; whereupon you feel a secret pride of strength. Last week men saw a vessel on this coast borne headlong on the breakers, and dashing itself with terrific force against the shore. It embedded itself, a miserable wreck, deep in sand and shingle. Was that brig in her convulsive throes strong? or was it powerless and helpless?

No, my brethren: God's spirit in the soul—an inward power of doing the thing we will and ought—that is strength, nothing else. All other force in us is only our weakness, the violence of driving passion. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me:" this is Christian strength. "I can not do the things I would:" that is the weakness of an unredeemed slave.

I instance one single evidence of strength in the early years of Jesus: I find it in that calm, long waiting of thirty years before He began his work. And yet all the evils he was to redress were there, provoking indignation, crying for interference—the hollowness of social life—the misinterpretations of Scripture—the forms of worship and phraseology which had hidden moral truth—the injustice—the priestcraft—the cowardice—the hypocrisies: He had long seen them all.

All those years His soul burned within Him with a Divine zeal and heavenly indignation. A mere *man*—a weak, emotional man of spasmodic feeling—a hot enthusiast, would have spoken out at once, and at once been crushed. The Everlasting Word incarnate bided his own time: "Mine hour is not yet come"—matured His energies, condensed them by repression—and then went forth to speak and do and suffer—His hour was come. This is strength: the power of a divine silence: the strong will to keep force till it is wanted: the power to wait God's time. "He that believeth," said the wise prophet, "shall not make haste."

II. Growth in wisdom—"Filled with wisdom."

Let us distinguish wisdom from two things. From information, first. It is one thing to be well-informed, it is another thing to be wise. Many books read, innumerable facts hived up in a capacious memory, this does not constitute wisdom. Books give it not: sometimes the bitterest experience gives it not. Many a heart-break may have come as the result of life-errors and life-mistakes; and yet men may be no wiser than before. Before the same temptations they fall again in the self-same way they fell before. Where they erred in youth they err still in age. A mournful truth! "Ever learning," said St. Paul, "and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Distinguish wisdom, again, from talent. Brilliancy of powers is not the wisdom for which Solomon prayed. Wisdom is of the heart rather than the intellect: the harvest of moral thoughtfulness, patiently reaped in through years. Two things are required—earnestness and love. First that rare thing earnestness—the earnestness which looks on life practically. Some of the wisest of the race have been men who have scarcely stirred beyond home, read little, felt and thought much. "Give me," said Solomon, "a wise and understanding heart." A heart which ponders upon life, trying to understand its mystery, not in order to talk about it like an orator, nor in order to theorize about it like a philosopher; but in order to know how to *live* and how to die.

And, besides this, love is required for wisdom—the love which opens the heart and makes it generous, and reveals secrets deeper than prudence or political economy teaches; for example, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Prudence did not calculate *that*, love revealed it. No man can be wise without love. Prudent: cunning: yes; but not wise. Whoever has closed his heart to love has got wisdom at one entrance quite shut out. A large, genial, loving heart—with that we have known a ploughman wise; without it we know a hundred men of statesmanlike sagacity fools—profound, but not wise. There was a man who pulled down his barns and built greater, a most sagacious man, getting on in life, acquiring, amassing, and all for self. The men of that generation called him, no doubt, wise—God said, "Thou fool."

Speaking humanly, the steps by which the wisdom of Jesus was acquired were two.

1. The habit of inquiry.
2. The collision of mind with other minds.

Both these we find in this anecdote: His parents found Him with the doctors in the temple, both hearing and asking them questions. For the mind of man left to itself is unproductive: alone in the wild woods he becomes a savage. Taken away from school early, and sent to the plough, the country boy loses by degrees that which distinguishes him from the cattle that he drives, and over his very features and looks the low animal expressions creep. Mind is necessary for mind. The mediatorial system extends through all God's dealings with us. The higher man is the mediator between God and the lower man: only through man can man receive development. For these reasons, we call this event at Jerusalem a crisis or turning-point in the history of Him who was truly man.

He had come from Nazareth's quiet valley and green slopes on the hillsides, where hill and valley, and cloud and wind, and day and night, had nourished His child's heart—from communion with minds proverbially low, for the adage was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"—to the capital of His country, to converse with the highest and most cultivated intellects. He had many a question to ask, and many a difficulty to solve. As for instance, such as this: How could the religion accredited in Jerusalem—a religion of long prayers and church services, and phylacteries, and rigorous sabbaths—be reconciled with the stern, manly righteousness of which He had read in the old prophets: a righteousness not of litany-makers, but of men with swords in their hands and zeal in their hearts, setting up God's kingdom upon earth? a kingdom of truth, and justice, and realities—were *they* bringing in that kingdom?—And if not, who should? Such questions had to be felt, and asked, and pondered on. Thenceforth we say therefore, in all reverence, dated the intellectual life of Jesus. From that time "Jesus increased in *wisdom*."

Not that they, the doctors of the temple, contributed much. Those ecclesiastical pedants had not much to tell Him that was worth the telling They were thinking about theology

He about religion. They about rubrics and church services, He about God His Father, and His will. And yet He gained more from them than they from Him. Have we never observed that the deepest revelations of ourselves are often made to us by trifling remarks met with here and there in conversation and books, sparks which set a whole train of thoughts on fire? Nay, that a false view given by an inferior mind has led us to a true one, and that conversations from which we had expected much light, turning out unsatisfactorily, have thrown us upon ourselves and God, and so become almost the birth-times of the soul? The truth is, it is not the amount which is poured in that gives wisdom: but the amount of creative mind and heart working on and stirred by what is so poured in. That conversation with miserable priests and formalists called into activity the One Creative Mind which was to fertilize the whole spiritual life of man to the end of time: and Jesus grew in wisdom by a conversation with pedants of the law.

What Jerusalem was to Him a town life is to us. Knowledge develops itself in the heated atmosphere of town life. Where men meet, and thought clashes with thought—where workmen sit round a board at work, intellectual irritability must be stirred more than where men live and work alone. The march of mind, as they call it, must go on. Whatever evils there may be in our excited, feverish, modern life, it is quite certain that we know through it more than our forefathers knew. The workman knows more of foreign politics than most statesmen knew two centuries ago. The child is versed in theological questions which only occupied master-minds once. But the question is, whether, like the Divine Child in the Temple, we are turning knowledge into wisdom, and whether, understanding more of the mysteries of life, we are feeling more of its sacred law; and whether, having left behind the priests, and the scribes, and the doctors, and the fathers, we are about our Father's business, and becoming wise to God.

III. Growth in grace—"the grace of God was upon Him." And this in three points:

1. The exchange of an earthly for a heavenly home.
2. Of an earthly for a heavenly parent.
3. The reconciliation of domestic duties.

First step: Exchange of an earthly for a heavenly home. Jesus was in the temple for the first time. That which was dull routine to others through dead habit, was full of vivid impression, fresh life, and God to Him. "My Father's business"—"My Father's house." How different the meaning of these expressions now from what it had been before! Before all was limited to the cottage of the carpenter: now it extended to the temple. He had felt the sanctities of a new home. In after-life the phrase which He had learned by earthly experience obtained a divine significance. "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Our first life is spontaneous and instinctive. Our second life is reflective. There is a moment when the life spontaneous passes into the life reflective. We live at first by instinct; then we look in, feel ourselves, ask what we are and whence we came, and whither we are bound. In an awful new world of mystery, and destinies, and duties, we feel God, and know that our true home is our Father's house which has many mansions.

Those are fearful, solitary moments; in which the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joys. Father—mother—can not share these; and to share is to intrude. The soul first meets God alone. So with Jacob when he saw the dream-ladder: so with Samuel when the voice called him: so with Christ. So with every son of man, God visits the soul in secrecy, in silence, and in solitariness. And the danger and duty of a teacher is twofold. 1st. To avoid hastening that feeling, hurrying that crisis-moment which some call conversion. 2d. To avoid crushing it. I have said that first religion is a kind of instinct; and if a child does not exhibit strong religious sensibilities, if he seem "heedless, untouched by awe or serious thought," still it is wiser not to interfere. He may be still at home with God: he may be worshipping at home; as has been said with not less truth than beauty, he may be

"Lying in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worship at the temple's inner shrine,"

God being with him when he knew it not. Very mysterious, and beautiful, and wonderful, is God's communing with the unconscious soul before reflection comes. The second caution is not to quench the feeling. Joseph and the Virgin chid the Child for His absence: "Why hast thou dealt so with us?" They could not understand His altered ways: His neglect of apparent duties: His indifference to usual pursuits. They mourned over the change. And this reminds us of the way in which affection's voice itself ministers to ruin. When God comes to the heart, and His presence is shown by thoughtfulness, and seriousness, and distaste to common business, and loneliness, and solitary musings, and a certain tone of melancholy, straightway we set ourselves to expostulate, to rebuke, to cheer, to prescribe amusement and gayeties, as the cure for seriousness which seems out of place. Some of us have seen that tried; and more fearful still, seen it succeed. And we have seen the spirit of frivolity and thoughtlessness, which had been banished for a time, come back again with seven spirits of evil more mighty than himself, and the last state of that person worse than the first. And we have watched the still small voice of God in the soul silenced. And we have seen the spirit of the world get its victim back again; and incipient goodness dried up like morning dew upon the heart. And they that loved him did it—his parents—his teachers. They quenched the smoking flax, and turned out the lamp of God lighted in the soul!

The last step was reconciliation to domestic duties. He went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. The first step in spirituality is to get a distaste for common duties. There is a time when creeds, ceremonies, services, are distasteful; when the conventional arrangements of society are intolerable burdens; and when, aspiring with a sense of vague longing after a goodness which shall be immeasurable, a duty which shall transcend mere law, a something which we can not put in words—all restraints of rule and habit gall the spirit. But the last and highest step in spirituality is made in feeling these common duties again to be divine and holy. This is the true liberty of Christ, when a free man binds himself in love to duty. Not in shrinking from our distasteful occupations, but in fulfilling them, do we realize our high origin. And this is the blessed, second childhood of Christian life. All the several stages towards it seem to be shadowed forth with accurate truthfulness in the narrative of the Messiah's infancy. First the quiet, unpretending, unconscious obedience and innocence of home. Then the crisis of inquiry: new strange thoughts, entrance upon a new world, hopeless seeking of truth from those who can not teach it, hearing many teachers and questioning all: thence bewilderment and bitterness, loss of relish for former duties: and small consolation to a man in knowing that he is farther off from heaven than when he was a boy. And then, lastly, the true reconciliation and atonement of our souls to God—a second springtide of life — a second faith deeper than that of childhood—not instinctive but conscious trust—childlike love come back again—childlike wonder—childlike implicitness of obedience—only deeper than childhood ever knew; when life has got a new meaning, when "old things are passed away, and all things are become new;" when earth has become irradiate with the feeling of our Father's business and our Father's home.

XV.

CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF SIN.

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10.

These words occur in the history which tells of the recovery of Zaccheus from a life of worldliness to the life of God. Zaccheus was a publican; and the publicans were outcasts among the Jews, because, having accepted the office under the Roman government of collecting the taxes imposed by Rome upon their brethren, they were regarded as traitors to the cause of Israel. Reckoned a degraded class, they *became* degraded. It is hard for any man to live above the moral standard acknowledged by his own class; and the moral standard of the publican was as low as possible. The first step downward is to sink in the estimation of others—the next and fatal step is to sink in a man's own estimation. The value ot character is that it pledges men to be what they are taken for. It is a fearful thing to have no character to support — nothing to fall back upon — nothing to keep a man up to himself. Now the publicans had no character.

Into the house of one of these outcasts the Son of Man had entered. It was quite certain that such an act would be commented upon severely by people who called themselves religious: it would seem to them scandalous, an outrage upon decency, a defiance to every rule of respectability and decorum. No pious Israelite would be seen holding equal intercourse with a publican. In anticipation of such remarks, before there was time perhaps to make them, Jesus spoke these words: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." They exhibit the peculiar aspect in which the Redeemer contemplated sin.

There are two ways of looking at sin. One is the severe view: it makes no allowance for frailty—it will not hear of temptation, nor distinguish between circumstances. Men who judge in this way shut their eyes to all but two objects —a plain law, and a transgression of that law. There is no more to be said: let the law take its course. Now if this be the right view of sin, there is abundance of room left for admiring what is good, and honorable, and upright: there is positively no room provided for restoration. Happy if you have done well; but if ill, then nothing is before you but judgment and fiery indignation.

The other view is one of laxity and false liberalism. When such men speak, prepare yourself to hear liberal judgments and lenient ones: a great deal about human weakness, error in judgment, mistakes, an unfortunate constitution, on which the chief blame of sin is to rest—a good heart. All well if we wanted, in this mysterious struggle of a life, only consolation. But we want far beyond comfort—goodness; and to be merely made easy when we have done wrong will not help us to *that!*

Distinct from both of these was Christ's view of guilt. His standard of right was high—higher than ever man had placed it before. Not moral excellence, but heavenly, He demanded. "Except your righteousness shall *exceed* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Read the Sermon on the Mount. It tells of a purity as of snow resting on an Alpine pinnacle, white in the blue holiness of heaven; and yet also, He the All-pure had tenderness for what was not pure. He who stood in divine uprightness that never faltered, felt compassion for the ruined, and infinite gentleness for human fall. Broken, disappointed, doubting hearts, in dismay and bewilderment, never looked in vain to Him. Very strange, if we stop to think of it, instead of repeating it as a matter of course. For generally human goodness repels from it evil men: they shun the society and presence of men reputed good, as owls fly from light. But here was purity *attracting* evil; that was the wonder. Harlots and wretches steeped in infamy gathered round Him. No wonder the purblind Pharisees thought there must be something in Him like such sinners which drew them so. Like draws to like. If He chose their society before that of the Pharisee, was it not because of some congeniality in evil? But they *did* crowd His steps, and that because they saw a hope opened out in a hopeless world for fallen spirits and broken hearts, ay, and seared hearts. The Son of Man was forever standing among the lost, and His ever predominant feelings were sadness for the evil in human nature, hope for the divine good in it, and the divine image never worn out wholly.

I perceive in this description three peculiarities, distin guishing Christ from ordinary men.

I. A peculiarity in the constitution of the Redeemer's moral nature.

II. A peculiarity in the objects of His solicitude.

III. A peculiarity in His way of treating guilt.

I. In His moral constitution. Manifested in that peculiar title which he assumed—The Son of Man. Let us see what that implies.

1. It implies fairly His divine origin: for it is an emphatic expression, and, as we may so say, an unnatural one. Imagine an apostle, St. Paul or St. John, insisting upon it perpetually that he himself was human. It would almost provoke a smile to hear either of them averring and affirming, I am a son of man: it would be unnatural, the affectation of condescension would be intolerable. Therefore, when we hear these words from Christ, we are compelled to think of them as contrasted with a higher nature. None could without presumption remind men that He was their brother and a Son of Man, except One who was also something higher, even the Son of God.

2. It implies the catholicity of His brotherhood.

Nothing in the judgment of historians stands out so sharply distinct as race—national character: nothing is more ineffaceable. The Hebrew was marked from all mankind. The Roman was perfectly distinct from the Grecian character; as markedly different as the rough English truthfulness is from Celtic brilliancy of talent. Now these peculiar nationalities are seldom combined. You rarely find the stern, old Jewish sense of holiness going together with the Athenian sensitiveness of what is beautiful. Not often do you find together severe truth and refined tenderness. Brilliancy seems opposed to perseverance. Exquisiteness of taste commonly goes along with a certain amount of untruthfulness. By humanity, as a whole, we mean the aggregate of all these separate excellences. Only in two places are they all found together—in the universal human race; and in Jesus Christ. He having, as it were, a whole humanity in Himself, combines them all.

Now this is the universality of the nature of Jesus Christ. There was in Him no national peculiarity or individual idiosyncrasy. He was not the Son of the Jew, nor the Son of the carpenter; nor the offspring of the modes of living and thinking of that particular century. He was the Son of Man. Once in the world's history was born a MAN. Once in the roll of ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature, one bud developed itself into a faultless flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth.

The best and most catholic of Englishmen has his prejudices. All the world over, our greatest writer would be recognized as having the English cast of thought. The pattern Jew would seem Jewish everywhere but in Judea. Take Abraham, St. John, St. Paul, place them where you will, in China or in Peru, they are Hebrews: they could not command all sympathies: their life could not be imitable except in part. They are foreigners in every land, and out of place in every country but their own. But Christ is the King of men, and "draws all men," because all character is in Him, separate from nationalities and limitations. As if the life-blood of every nation were in His veins, and that which is best and truest in every man, and that which is tenderest, and gentlest, and purest in every woman, were in His character. He is emphatically the Son of *Man.*

Out of this arose two powers of His sacred humanity—the universality of His sympathies, and their intense particular personality.

The universality of His sympathies: for, compare Him with any one of the sacred characters of Scripture. You know how intensely national they were in their sympathies, priests, prophets, and apostles: for example, the apostles "marvelled that He spake with a woman of Samaria:"—just before His resurrection, their largest charity had not reached beyond this, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto *Israel?*" Or, to come down to modern times, when His spirit has been moulding men's ways of thought for many ages:—now, when we talk of our philanthropy and catholic liberality, here in Christian England, we have scarcely any fellow-feeling, true and genuine, with other nations, other churches, other parties, than our own: we care nothing for Italian or Hungarian struggles; we think of Romanists as the Jew thought of Gentiles; we speak of German Protestants in the same proud, wicked, self-sufficient way in which the Jew spoke of Samaritans.

Unless we bring such matters home, and away from vague generalities, and consider what we and all men are, or rather are not, we can not comprehend with due wonder the mighty sympathies of the heart of Christ. None of the miserable antipathies that fence us from all the world, bounded the outgoings of that love, broad and deep and wide as the heart of God. Wherever the mysterious pulse of human life was beating, wherever aught human was in struggle, there to Him was a thing not common or unclean, but cleansed by God and sacred. Compare the daily, almost indispensable language of our life with His spirit. "Common people?"—Point us out the passage where He called any people that God His Father made, common? "Lower orders?"—Tell us when and where He, whose home was the workshop of the carpenter, authorized you or me to know any man after the flesh as low or high? To Him who called Himself the Son of Man, the link was manhood. And *that* he could discern even when it was marred. Even in outcasts His eye could recognize the sanctities of a nature human still. Even in the harlot "one of Eve's family:"—a "son of Abraham" even in Zaccheus.

Once more, out of that universal, catholic nature rose another power—the power of intense, particular, personal affections. He was the Brother and Saviour of the human race; but this because He was the Brother and Saviour of every separate man in it.

Now it is very easy to feel great affection for a country as a whole; to have, for instance, great sympathies for Poland, or Ireland, or America, and yet not care a whit for any single man in Poland, and to have strong antipathies to every single individual American. Easy to be a warm lover of England, and yet not love one living Englishman. Easy to set a great value on a flock of sheep, and yet have no particular care for any one sheep or lamb. If it were killed, another of the same species might replace it. Easy to have fine, large, liberal views about the working classes, or the emancipation of the negroes, and yet never have done a loving act to one. Easy to be a great philanthropist, and yet have no strong friendships, no deep personal attachments.

For the idea of an universal manlike sympathy was not new when Christ was born. The reality *was* new. But before this, in the Roman theatre, deafening applause was called forth by this sentence, "I am a man—nothing that can affect man is indifferent to me." A fine sentiment—that was all. Every pretense of realizing that sentiment, except one, has been a failure. One and but One has succeeded in loving man: and that by loving men. No sublime high-sounding language in His lips about "educating the masses," or "elevating the people." The charlatanry of our modern sentiment had not appeared then: it is but the parody of His love.

What was His mode of sympathy with men? He did not sit down to philosophize about the progress of the species, or dream about a millennium. He gathered round Him twelve men. He formed one friendship, special, concentrated, deep. He did not give himself out as the leader of the publican's cause, or the champion of the rights of the dangerous classes; but He associated with Himself Matthew, a publican called from the detested receipt of custom. He went into the house of Zaccheus, and treated him like a fellow-creature —a brother, and a son of Abraham. His catholicity or philanthropy was not an abstraction, but an aggregate of personal attachments.

II. Peculiarity in the objects of Christ's solicitude.

He had come to seek and to save *the* "*lost.*" The world is lost, and Christ came to save the world. But by the lost in this place He does not mean the world; He means a special class, lost in a more than common sense, as sheep are lost which have strayed from the flock, and wandered far beyond all their fellows scattered in the wilderness.

Some men are lost by the force of their own passions, as Balaam was by love of gold: as Saul was by self-will, ending in jealousy, and pride darkened into madness: as Haman was by envy indulged and brooded on: as the harlots were, through feelings pure and high at first, inverted and perverted: as Judas was by secret dishonesty, undetected in its first beginnings, the worst misfortune that can befall a tendency to a false life. And others are lost by the entanglement of outward circumstances, which make escape, humanly speaking, impossible. Such were the publicans: men *forced*, like executioners, into degradation. An honest publican, or a holy executioner, would be miracles to marvel at. And some are lost by the laws of society, which while defending society have no mercy for its outcasts, and forbid their return, fallen once, forever.

Society has power to bind on earth; and what it binds is bound upon the soul indeed. For a man or woman who has lost self-respect is lost indeed.

And oh! the untold world of agony contained in that expression—"a lost soul!" agony exactly in proportion to the nobleness of original powers. For it is a strange and mournful truth, that the qualities which enable men to shine are exactly those which minister to the worst ruin. God's highest gifts—talent, beauty, feeling, imagination, power: they carry with them the possibility of the highest heaven and the lowest hell. Be sure that it is by that which is highest in you that you may be lost. It is the awful warning, and not the excuse of evil, that the light which leads astray is light from heaven. The shallow fishing-boat glides safely over the reefs where the noble bark strands: it is the very might and majesty of her career that bury the sharp rock deeper in her bosom. There are thousands who are not lost (like the re spectable Pharisees), because they had no impetuous impulses, no passion, no strong enthusiasm, by the perversion of which they could be lost.

Now this will explain to us what there was in these lost ones which left a hope for their salvation, and which Jesus saw in them to seek and save. Outwardly men saw a crust of black scowling impenitence. Reprobates they called them. Below that outward crust ran a hot lava-stream of anguish: What was that? The coward fear of hell? Nay, hardened men defy hell. The anguish of the lost ones of this world is not fear of punishment. It was, and is, the misery of having quenched a light brighter than the sun: the intolerable sense of being sunk: the remorse of knowing that they were not what they might have been. And He saw that: He knew that it was the germ of life which God's spirit could develop into salvation.

It was His work and His desire to save such, and in this world a new and strange solicitude it was, for the world had seen before nothing like it.

Not half a century ago a great man was seen stooping and working in a charnel-house of bones. Uncouth, nameless fragments lay around him, which the workmen had dug up and thrown aside as rubbish. They belonged to some far-back age, and no man knew what they were or whence. Few men cared. The world was merry at the sight of a philosopher groping among mouldy bones. But when that creative mind, reverently discerning the fontal types of living being in diverse shapes, brought together those strange fragments, bone to bone, and rib to claw, and tooth to its own corresponding vertebræ, recombining the wondrous forms of past ages, and presenting each to the astonished world as it moved and lived a hundred thousand ages back, then men began to perceive that a new science had begun on earth.

And such was the work of Christ. They saw Him at work among the fragments and mouldering wreck of our humanity, and sneered. But He took the dry bones such as Ezekiel saw in vision, which no man thought could live, and He breathed into them the breath of life. He took the scattered fragments of our ruined nature, interpreted their meaning, showed the original intent of those powers, which were now destructive only, drew out from publicans and sinners yearnings which were incomprehensible, and feelings which were misunderstood, vindicated the beauty of the original intention, showed the Divine Order below the chaos, exhibited to the world once more a human soul in the form in which God had made it, saying to the dry bones "Live!"

Only what in the great foreigner was a taste, in Christ was love. In the one the gratification of an enlightened curiosity: in the other the gratification of a sublime affection. In the philosopher it was a longing to restore and reproduce the past. In Christ a hope for the future—"to seek and to save that which was lost."

III. A peculiarity in His mode of treatment. How were these lost ones to be restored? The human plans are reducible to three. Governments have tried chastisement for the reclamation of offenders. For ages that was the only expedient known either to Church or State. Time has written upon it failure. I do not say that penal severity is not needful. Perhaps it is, for protection, and for the salutary expression of indignation against certain forms of evil. But as a system of reclamation it has failed. Did the rack ever reclaim in heart one heretic? Did the scaffold ever soften one felon? One universal fact of history replies: where the penal code was most sanguinary, and when punishments were most numerous, crime was most abundant.

Again, society has tried exclusion for life. I do not pretend to say that it may not be needful. It *may* be necessary to protect your social purity by banishing offenders of a certain sort forever. I only say for recovery it is a failure. Whoever knew one case where the ban of exclusion was hopeless, and the shame of that exclusion reformed? Did we ever hear of a fallen creature made moral by despair? Name, if you can, the publican or the harlot in any age brought back to goodness by a Pharisee, or by the system of a Pharisee.

And once more, some governors have tried the system of indiscriminate lenity: they forgave great criminals, trusting all the future to gratitude: they passed over great sins, they sent away the ringleaders of rebellion with honors heaped upon them: they thought this was the Gospel: they expected dramatic emotion to work wonders. How far this miserable system has succeeded, let those tell us who have studied the history of our South African colonies for the last twenty years. We were tired of cruelty—we tried sentiment—we trusted to feeling. Feeling failed: we only made hypocrites, and encouraged rebellion by impunity. Inexorable severity, rigorous banishment, indiscriminate and mere forgivingness—all are failures.

In Christ's treatment of guilt we find three peculiarities Sympathy, holiness, firmness.

1. By human sympathy. In the treatment of Zaccheus

this was almost all We read of almost nothing else as the instrument of that wonderful reclamation. One thing only, Christ went to his house self-invited. But that one was every thing. Consider it—Zaccheus was, if he were like other publicans, a hard and hardened man. He felt people shrink from him in the streets. He lay under an imputation: and we know how that feeling of being universally suspected and misinterpreted makes a man bitter, sarcastic, and defiant. And so the outcast would go home, look at his gold rejoice in the revenge he could take by false accusations felt a pride in knowing that they might hate, but could not help fearing him: scorned the world, and shut up his heart against it.

At last, one whom all men thronged to see, and all men honored, or seemed to honor, came to him, offered to go home and sup with him. For the first time for many years Zaccheus felt that he was not despised, and the floodgates of that avaricious, shut heart were opened in a tide of love and generosity. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." He was reclaimed to human feeling by being taught that he was a man still; recognized and treated like a man. A Son of Man had come to "seek" him—the lost.

2. By the exhibition of Divine holiness.

The holiness of Christ differed from all earthly, common, vulgar holiness. Wherever it was, it elicited a sense of sinfulness and imperfection. Just as the purest cut crystal of the rock looks dim beside the diamond, so the best men felt a sense of guilt growing distinct upon their souls. When the Anointed of God came near, "Depart from me," said the bravest and truest of them all, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But at the same time the holiness of Christ did not awe men away from Him, nor repel them. It inspired them with hope. It was not that vulgar unapproachable sanctity which makes men awkward in its presence, and stands aloof. Its peculiar characteristic was that it made men enamored of goodness. It ' drew all men unto Him." This is the difference between greatness that is first-rate and greatness which is second-rate — between heavenly and earthly goodness. The second-rate and the earthly draws admiration on itself. You say, "how great an act—how good a man!" The first-rate and the heavenly imparts itself—inspires a spirit. You feel a kindred something in you that rises up to meet it, and draws you out of yourself, making you better than you were before, and opening out the infinite possibilities of your life and soul.

And such pre-eminently was the holiness of Christ. Had some earthly great or good one come to Zaccheus's house, a prince or a nobleman, his feeling would have been, What condescension is there! But when *He* came whose every word and act had in it life and power, no such barren reflection was the result: but instead, the beauty of holiness had become a power within him, and a longing for self-consecration. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

By Divine sympathy, and by the Divine Image exhibited in the speaking act of Christ, the lost was sought and saved. He was saved, as alone all fallen men can be saved. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he was changed into the same image." And this is the very essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are redeemed by the life of God without us, manifested in the person of Christ, kindling into flame the life of God that is within us. Without Him we can do nothing. Without Him the warmth that was in Zaccheus's heart would have smouldered uselessly away. Through Him it became life and light, and the lost was saved.

XVI.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST.

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."—John xvii. 19.

The prayer in which these words occur is given to us by the Apostle John alone. Perhaps only St. John *could* give it, for it belongs to the peculiar province of his revelation. He presents us with more of the heart of Christ than the other apostles: with less of the outward manifestations. He gives us more conversations, fewer miracles: more of the inner life, more of what Christ was, less of what Christ did.

St. John's mind was not argumentative, but intuitive There are two ways of reaching truth: by reasoning it out and by feeling it out. All the profoundest truths are felt out. The deep glances into truth are got by love. Love a man, that is the best way of understanding him. Feel a truth, that is the only way of comprehending it.

Not that you can put your sense of such truths into words in the shape of accurate maxims or doctrines: but the truth is reached, notwithstanding.*

Now St. John *felt out* truth. He understood his Lord by loving him. You find no long trains of argument in St. John's writings: an atmosphere of contemplation pervades all. Brief, full sentences, glowing with imagery of which the mere prose intellect makes nonsense, and which a warm heart alone interprets, that is the character of his writing. very different from the other apostles'. St. Peter's knowledge of Christ was formed by impetuous mistakes, corrected slowly and severely. St. Paul's Christianity was formed by principles wrought out glowing hot, as a smith hammers out ductile iron, in his unresting, earnest fire of thought, where the Spirit dwelt in warmth and light forever, kindling the Divine fire of inspiration. St. John and St. John's Christianity were formed by personal view of Christ, by intercourse with Him, and by silent contemplation. Slowly, month by month and year by year, he gazed on Christ in silence and thoughtful adoration: "reflecting as from a glass the glory of the Lord," he became like Him—caught His tones, His modes of thought, His very expressions, and became partaker of His inward life. A "Christ was formed in him."

Hence it was that this prayer was revealed to St. John alone of the apostles, and by him alone recorded for us. The Saviour's mind touched his: through secret sympathy he was inspired with the mystic consciousness of what had passed and what was passing in the deeps of the soul of Christ. Its secret longings and its deepest struggles were known to John alone.

This particular sentence in the prayer which I have taken for the text was peculiarly after the heart of the Apostle John. For I have said that to him the true life of Christ was rather the inner life than the outward acts of life. Now this sentence from the lips of Jesus speaks of the atoning sacrifice as an inward mental act rather than as an outward deed: a self-consecration wrought out in the will of Christ. For their sakes I am sanctifying myself. That is a resolve—a secret of the inner life. No wonder that it was recorded by St. John. The text has two parts.

I. The sanctification of Jesus Christ.
II. The sanctification of His people.

I. Christ's sanctification of himself. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." We must explain this word "sanctify;" upon it the whole meaning turns. Clearly it has not the ordinary popular sense here of making holy. Christ *was* holy. He could not by an inward effort or struggle *make* Himself holy, for He was that already. Let us trace the history of the word "sanctify" in the early pages of the Jewish history.

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* Compare 1 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

When the destroying angel smote the first-born of the Egyptian families, the symbolic blood on the lintel of every Hebrew house protected the eldest born from the plague of death. In consequence, a law of Moses viewed every eldest son in a peculiar light. He was reckoned as a thing devoted to the Lord—redeemed, and therefore set apart. The word used to express this devotion is *sanctify*. "The Lord said unto Moses, *Sanctify* unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." By a subsequent arrangement these first-born were exchanged for the Levites. Instead of the eldest son in each family, a whole tribe was taken, and reckoned as set apart and devoted to Jehovah, just as now a substitute is provided to serve in war in another's stead. Therefore the tribe of Levi were said to be *sanctified* to God.

Ask we what was meant by saying that the Levites were sanctified to God? The ceremony of their sanctification will explain it to us. It was a very significant one. The priest touched with the typical blood of a sacrificed animal the Levite's right hand, right eye, right foot. This was the Levite's sanctification. It devoted every faculty and every power—of seeing, doing, walking, the right-hand faculties—the best and choicest—to God's peculiar service. He was a man set apart. To sanctify, therefore, in the Hebrew phrase, meant to devote or consecrate. Let us pause for a few moments to gather up the import of this ceremony.

The first-born are a nation's hope: they may be said to represent a whole nation. The consecration, therefore, of the first-born was the consecration of the entire nation by their representatives. Now the Levites were substituted for the first-born. The Levites consequently represented all Israel; and by their consecration the life of Israel was declared to be in idea and by right a consecrated life to God. But further still. As the Levites represented Israel, so Israel itself was but a part taken for the whole, and represented the whole human race. If any one thinks this fanciful, let him remember the principle of representation on which the whole Jewish system was built. For example—the first-fruits of the harvest were consecrated to God. Why? to declare that portion and that only to be God's? No; St. Paul says as a part for the whole, to teach and remind that the whole harvest was his. "If the first-fruits be holy, the lump also is holy." So in the same way, God consecrated a peculiar people to himself? Why? The Jews say because they alone are His. We say, as a part representative of the whole, to show in one nation what all are meant to be. The holiness of Israel is a representative holiness. Just as the consecrated Levite stood for what Israel was meant to be, so the anointed and separated nation represents forever what the whole race of man is in the Divine Idea—a thing whose proper life is perpetual consecration.

One step farther. This being the true life of humanity, name it how you will, sanctification, consecration, devotion, sacrifice, Christ the Representative of the Race, submits Himself in the text to the universal law of this devotion. The true law of every life is consecration to God: therefore Christ says, I consecrate myself: else He had not been a Man in God's idea of Manhood—for the idea of Man which God had been for ages laboring to give through a consecrated tribe and a consecrated nation to the world, was the idea of a being whose life-law is sacrifice, every act and every thought being devoted to God.

Accordingly, this is the view which Christ Himself gave of His own Divine humanity. He spoke of it as of a thing devoted by a Divine decree. "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath *sanctified*, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God?"

We have reached, therefore, the meaning of this word in the text, "For their sakes I sanctify," *i. e.*, consecrate or devote "myself." The first meaning of sanctify is to set apart. But to set apart for God is to devote or consecrate; and to consecrate a thing is to make it holy. And thus we have the three meanings of the word, viz., to set apart, to devote, to make holy—rising all out of one simple idea. To go somewhat into particulars. This sanctification is spoken of here chiefly as threefold: Self-devotion by inward resolve; self-devotion to the truth; self-devotion for the sake of others.

1. He devoted Himself *by inward resolve.* "I sanctify myself." God His Father had devoted Him before. He had sanctified and sent Him. It only remained that this devotion should become by His own act—*self*-devotion: completed by His own will. Now in that act of will consisted His sanctification of Himself.

For observe, this was done within: in secret, solitary struggle—in wrestling with all temptations which deterred Him from His work—in resolve to do it unflinchingly: in real human battle and victory.

Therefore this self-sanctification applies to the whole tone and history of His mind. He was forever devoting Himself to work—forever bracing His human spirit to sublime resolve. But it applies peculiarly to certain special moments, when some crisis came, as on this present occasion, which called for an act of will.

The first of these moments which we read of came when He was twelve years of age. We pondered on it a few weeks ago. In the temple, that earnest conversation with the doctors indicates to us that He had begun to revolve His own mission in His mind; for the answer to His mother's expostulations shows us what had been the subject of those questions He had been putting: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Solemn words, significant of a crisis in His mental history. He had been asking those doctors about His Father's business: what it was, and how it was to be done by Him of whom He had read in the prophets, even Himself. This was the earliest self-devotion of Messiah: the boy was sanctifying Himself for life and manhood's work.

The next time was in that preparation of the wilderness which we call Christ's temptation. You can not look deeply into that strange story without perceiving that the true meaning of it lies in this, that the Saviour in that conflict was steeling His soul against the threefold form in which temptation presented itself to Him in after-life, to mar or neutralize His ministry.

1. To convert the hard, stony life of duty into the comfort and enjoyment of this life: to barter, like Esau, life for pottage: to use Divine powers in Him only to procure bread of earth.

2. To distrust God, and try impatiently some wild, sudden plan, instead of His meek and slow-appointed ways—to cast Himself from the temple, as we dash ourselves against our destiny.

3. To do homage to the majesty of wrong: to worship evil for the sake of success: to make the world His own by force or by crooked policy, instead of by suffering.

These were the temptations of His life, as they are of ours. If you search through His history, you find that all trial was reducible to one or other of these three forms. In the wilderness His soul foresaw them all; they were all in spirit met then, fought and conquered before they came in their reality. In the wilderness He had sanctified and consecrated Himself against all possible temptation, and life thenceforward was only the meeting of that in fact which had been in resolve met already—a vanquished foe.

I said He had sanctified Himself against every trial: I should have said, against every one except the last. The temptation had not exhibited the terrors and the form of death: He had yet to nerve and steel Himself to that. And hence the lofty sadness which characterizes His later ministry, as he went down from the sunny mountain-tops of life into the darkening shades of the valley where lies the grave. There is a perceptible difference between the tone of His earlier and that of His later ministry, which by its evidently undesigned truthfulness gives us a strong feeling of the reality of the history.

At first all is bright, full of hope, signalized by success and triumph. You hear from Him joyous words of anticipated victory: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." And we recollect how His first sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum was hailed; how all eyes were fixed on Him, and His words seemed full of grace.

Slowly after this there comes a change over the spirit of His life. The unremitting toil becomes more superhuman, "I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." The cold presentiment of doom hangs more often on Him. He begins to talk to His disciples in mysterious hints of the betrayal and the cross. He is going down into the cloud-land, full of shadows where nothing is distinct, and His step becomes more solemn, and His language more deeply sad. Words of awe, the words as of a soul struggling to pierce through thick glooms of mystery, and doubt, and death, come more often from His lips: for instance, "Now is My soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I into the world." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And here in the text is another of those sentences of mournful grandeur: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Observe the present tense. Not I *shall* devote Myself—but I sanctify, *i. e.*, I am sanctifying Myself. It was a mental struggle going on then. This prayer was, so to speak, part of this Gethsemane prayer, the first utterances of it—broken by interruption—then finished in the garden. The consecration and the agony had begun—the long inward battle—which was not complete till the words came, too solemnly to be called triumphantly, though they were indeed the trumpet-tones of man's grand victory, "It is finished."

Secondly the sanctification of Christ was self-devotion to the truth. I infer this, because He says, "I sanctify Myself, that they *also* might be sanctified through the truth." "Also" implies that what His consecration was, theirs was. Now theirs is expressly said to be sanctification by the truth. That, then, was His consecration too. It was the truth which devoted Him and marked Him out for death.

For it was not merely death that made Christ's sacrifice the world's atonement. There is no special virtue in mere death, even though it be the death of God's own Son. Blood does not please God. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner." Do you think God has pleasure in the blood of the righteous? blood merely as blood? death merely as a debt of nature paid? suffering merely, as if suffering had in it mysterious virtue?

No, my brethren! God can be satisfied with that only which pertains to the conscience and the will; so says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Sacrifices could never make the comers thereunto perfect." The blood of Christ was sanctified by the will with which He shed it: it is *that* which gives it value. It was a sacrifice offered up to conscience. He suffered as a martyr to the truth. He fell in fidelity to a cause. The sacred cause in which He fell was love to the human race: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man give his life for his friends." Now that truth was the cause in which Christ died. We have His own words as proof: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

Let us see how His death was a martyrdom of witness to truth.

1. He proclaimed the identity between religion and goodness. He distinguished religion from correct views, accurate religious observances, and even from devout feelings. He said that to be religious is to be good. "Blessed are the pure in heart . . . . Blessed are the merciful . . . . Blessed are the meek." Justice, mercy, truth—these He proclaimed as the real righteousness of God.

But because He taught the truth of Godliness, the Pharisees became his enemies: those men of opinions and maxims. those men of ecclesiastical, ritual and spiritual pretensions.

Again, He taught spiritual religion. God was not in the temple: the temple was to come down. But religion would survive the temple. God's temple was man's soul; and because He taught spiritual worship, the priests became his enemies. Hence came those accusations that He blasphemed the temple: that he had said contemptuously, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Once more he struck a death-blow at Jewish exclusiveness: He proclaimed the truth of the character of God. God the Father: the hereditary descent from Abraham was nothing: the inheritance of Abraham's faith was every thing. God therefore would admit the Gentiles who inherited that faith. For God loved the world, not a private few: not the Jew only, not the elder brother who had been all his life at home, but the prodigal younger brother too, who had wandered far and had sinned much.

Now because He proclaimed this salvation of the Gentiles, the whole Jewish nation were offended. The first time he ever hinted it at Capernaum, they took Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might throw Him thence.

And thus by degrees—priests, Pharisees, rulers, rich and poor—He had roused them all against Him: and the Divine Martyr of the truth stood alone at last beside the cross, when the world's life was to be won, without a friend.

All this we must bear in mind, if we would understand the expression, "I sanctify myself." He was sanctifying and consecrating Himself for this—to be a witness to the truth—a devoted One, consecrated in His heart's deeps to die—loyal to truth, even though it should have to give as the reward of allegiance, not honors and kingdoms, but only a crown of thorns.

3. The self-sanctification of Christ was for the sake of others. "For their sakes." He obeyed the law of self-consecration for Himself, else He had not been man; for that law is the universal law of our human existence. But he obeyed it not for Himself alone, but for others also. It was vicarious self-devotion, *i. e.*, instead of others, as the Representative of them. "For their sakes," as an example, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Distinguish between a model and an example. You copy the outline of a model: you imitate the spirit of an example. Christ is our example: Christ is not our model. You might copy the life of Christ: make Him a model in every act: and yet you might be not one whit more of a Christian than before. You might wash the feet of poor fishermen as He did, live a wandering life with nowhere to lay your head. You might go about teaching, and never use any words but His words, never express a religious truth except in Bible language: have no home, and mix with publicans and harlots. Then Christ would be your model: you would have copied His life like a picture, line for line, and shadow for shadow; yet you might not be Christlike.

On the other hand, you might imitate Christ, get his Spirit, breathe the atmosphere of thought which He breathed: do not one single act which He did, but every act in His spirit: you might be rich, whereas He was poor: never teach, whereas He was teaching always; lead a life in all outward particulars the very contrast and opposite of His: and yet the spirit of His self-devotion might have saturated your whole being, and penetrated into the life of every act and the essence of every thought. Then Christ would have become your example: for we can only imitate that of which we have caught the spirit.

Accordingly, He sanctified Himself that He might become a living, inspiring example, firing men's hearts by love to imitation—a burning and a shining light shed upon the mystery of life, to guide by a spirit of warmth lighting from within. In Christ there is not given to us a faultless essay on the loveliness of self-consecration, to convince our reason how beautiful it is: but there is given to us a self-consecrated One: a living Truth, a living Person; a life that was beautiful, a death that we feel in our inmost hearts to have been divine: and all this in order that the Spirit of that consecrated life and consecrated death, through love, and wonder, and deep enthusiasm, may pass into us, and sanctify us also to the truth in life and death. He sacrificed Himself that we might offer *ourselves* a living sacrifice to God.

II. Christ's sanctification of His people: "That they also might be sanctified through the truth."

To sanctify means two things. It means to devote, and it means to set apart. Yet these two meanings are but different sides of the same idea: for to be devoted to God is to be separated from all that is opposed to God. Those whom Christ sanctifies are separated from two things: from the world's evil, and from the world's spirit.

1. From the world's evil. So in verse 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Not from physical evil, not from pain: Christ does not exempt his own from such kinds of evil. Nay, we hesitate to call pain and sorrow evils, when we remember what bright characters they have made, and when we recollect that almost all who came to Christ

came impelled by suffering of some kind or other. For example, the Syrophenician woman had been driven to "fall at His feet and worship Him," by the anguish of the tormented daughter whom she had watched. It was a widow that cast into the treasury all her living, and that widow poor.

Possibly want and woe will be seen hereafter, when this world of appearance shall have passed away, to have been, not evils, but God's blessed angels and ministers of His most parental love.

But the evil from which Christ's sanctification separates the soul is that worst of evils—properly speaking the only evil—sin: revolt from God, disloyalty to conscience, tyranny of the passions, strife of our self-will in conflict with the loving will of God. This is our foe—our only foe that we have a right to hate with perfect hatred, meet it where we will, and under whatever form, in Church or state, in false social maxims, or in our own hearts. And it was to sanctify or separate us from this that Christ sanctified or consecrated Himself. By the blood of his anguish—by the strength of his unconquerable resolve—we are sworn against it—bound to be, in a world of evil, consecrated spirits, or else greatly sinning.

Lastly, the self-devotion of Christ separates us from the world's spirit.

Distinguish between the world's evil and the world's spirit. Many things which can not be classed amongst things evil are yet dangerous as things worldly.

It is one of the most difficult of all ministerial duties to define what the world-spirit is. It can not be identified with vice, nor can unworldliness be defined as abstinence from vice. The Old Testament saints were many of them great transgressors. Abraham lied, Jacob deceived, David committed adultery. Crimes dark, surely! and black enough! And yet these men were unworldly; the spirit of the world was not in them. They erred and were severely punished; for crime is crime in whomsoever it is found, and most a crime in a saint of God. But they were beyond their age: they were not of the world. They were strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They were, in the midst of innumerable temptations from within and from without, seeking after a better country, *i. e.*, a heavenly.

Again, you can not say that worldliness consists in mixing with many people, and unworldliness with few. Daniel was unworldly in the luxurious, brilliant court of Babylon: Adam, in Paradise, had but one companion; that *one* was the world to him.

Again, the spirit of the world can not be defined as con sisting in any definite plainness of dress or peculiar mode of living. If we would be sanctified from the world when Christ comes, we must be found, not stripping off the ornaments from our persons, but the censoriousness from our tongues and the selfishness from our hearts.

Once more, that which is a sign of unworldliness in one age is not a certain sign of it in another. In Daniel's age, when dissoluteness marked the world, frugal living was a sufficient evidence that he was not of the world. To say that he restrained his appetites was nearly the same as saying that he was sanctified. But now when intemperance is not the custom, a life as temperate as Daniel's might coexist with all that is worst of the spirit of the world in the heart; almost no man then was temperate who was not serving God —now hundreds of thousands are self-controlled by prudence, who serve the world and self.

Therefore you can not define sanctification by any outward marks or rules. But he who will thoroughly watch will understand what is this peculiar sanctification or separation from the world which Christ desired in His servants.

He is sanctified by the self-devotion of his Master from the world, who has a life in himself independent of the maxims and customs which sweep along with them other men. In his Master's words, "A well of water *in* him, springing up into everlasting life," keeping his life on the whole pure, and his heart fresh. His true life is hid with Christ in God. His motives, the aims and objects of his life, however inconsistent they may be with each other, however irregularly or feebly carried out, are yet on the whole above, not here. His citizenship is in heaven. He may be tempted, he may err, he may fall, but still in his darkest aberrations there will be a something that keeps before him still the dreams and aspirations of his best days—a thought of the cross of Christ and the self-consecration that it typifies—a conviction that that is the highest, and that alone the true life. And that—if it were only that—would make him essentially different from other men, even when he mixes with them and seems to catch their tone, among them but not one of them. And that life within him is Christ's pledge that he shall be yet what he longs to be—a something severing him, separating him, consecrating him. For him and for such as him the consecration prayer of Christ was made. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world: Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

XVII.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

1. THE GLORY OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."—John ii. 11.

This was the "beginning of miracles" which Jesus did, and yet he was now thirty years of age. For thirty years he had done no miracle; and that is in itself almost worthy to be called a miracle. That he abstained for thirty years from the exertion of His wonder-working power is as marvellous as that He possessed for three years the power to exert. He was content to live long in deep obscurity. Nazareth, with its quiet valley, was world enough for Him. There was no disposition to rush into publicity · no haste to be known in the world. The quiet consciousness of power which breathes in that expression, "Mine hour is not yet come," had marked His whole life. He could bide His time. He had the strength to wait.

This was true greatness—the greatness of man, because also the greatness of God: for such is God's way in all He does. In all the works of God there is a conspicuous absence of haste and hurry. All that He does ripens slowly. Six slow days and nights of creative force before man was made: two thousand years to discipline and form a Jewish people: four thousand years of darkness, and ignorance, and crime, before the fullness of the time had come, when He could send forth His Son: unnumbered ages of war before the thousand years of solid peace can come. Whatever contradicts this Divine plan must pay the price of haste—brief duration. All that is done before the hour is come decays fast. All precocious things ripened before their time, wither before their time: precocious fruit, precocious minds, forced feelings. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

We shall distribute the various thoughts which this event suggests under two heads.

I. The glory of the Virgin Mother.
II. The glory of the Divine Son.

I. The glory of the Virgin Mother.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians St Paul speaks of the glory of the woman as of a thing distinct from the glory of the man. They are the two opposite poles of the sphere of humanity. Their provinces are not the same, but different. The qualities which are beautiful as predominant in one are not beautiful when predominant in the other. That which is the glory of the one is not the glory of the other. The glory of her who was highly favored among women, and whom all Christendom has agreed in contemplating as the type and ideal of her sex, was glory in a different order from that in which her Son exhibited the glory of a perfect manhood. A glory different in *degree*, of course: the one was only human, the other more than human, the Word made flesh; but different in *order* too: the one manifesting forth *her* glory—the grace of womanhood; the other manifesting forth *His* glory—the wisdom and the majesty of manhood, in which God dwelt.

Different orders or kinds of glory. Let us consider the glory of the Virgin, which is, in other words, the glory of what is womanly in character.

1. Remarkable, first of all, in this respect, is her considerateness. There is gentle, womanly tact in those words, "They have no wine." Unselfish thoughtfulness about others' comforts, not her own: delicate anxiety to save a straitened family from the exposure of their poverty: and moreover, for this is very worthy of observation, carefulness about gross, material things: a sensual thing, we might truly say —wine, the instrument of intoxication: yet see how her feminine tenderness transfigured and sanctified such gross and common things; how that wine which, as used by the revellers of the banquet, might be coarse and sensual, was in her use sanctified, as it was by unselfishness and charity: a thing quite heavenly, glorified by the ministry of love.

It was so that in old times, with thoughtful hospitality, Rebekah offered water at the well to Abraham's way-worn servant. It was so that Martha showed her devotion to her Lord even to excess, being cumbered with much serving It was so that the women ministered to Christ out of their substance—water, food, money. They took these low things of earth, and spiritualized them into means of hospitality and devotion.

And this is the glory of womanhood: surely no common glory: surely one which, if she rightly comprehended her place on earth, might enable her to accept its apparent humiliation unrepiningly; the glory of unsensualizing coarse and common things, sensual things, the objects of mere sense, meat and drink and household cares, elevating them.

by the spirit in which she ministers them, into something transfigured and sublime.

The humblest mother of a poor family who is cumbered with much serving, or watching over a hospitality which she is too poor to delegate to others, or toiling for love's sake in household work, needs no emancipation in God's sight. It is the prerogative and the glory of her womanhood to consecrate the meanest things by a ministry which is not for self.

2. Submission. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Here is the true spirit of obedience. Not slavishness, but entire loyalty and perfect trust in a person whom we reverence. She did not comprehend her Son's strange repulse and mysterious words, but she knew that they were not capricious words, for there was no caprice in Him: she knew that the law which ruled His will was right, and that importunity was useless. So she bade them reverently wait in silence till His time should come.

Here is another distinctive glory of womanhood. In the very outset of the Bible submission is revealed as her peculiar lot and destiny. If you were merely to look at the words as they stand, declaring the results of the Fall, you would be inclined to call that vocation of obedience a curse; but in the spirit of Christ it is transformed, like labor, into a blessing. In this passage a twofold blessing stands connected with it Freedom from all doubt; and prevailing power in prayer.

The first is freedom from all doubt. The Virgin seems to have felt no perplexity at that rebuke and seeming refusal; and yet perplexity and misgiving would seem natural. A more masculine and imperious mind would have been startled; made sullen, or have begun at once to sound the depths of metaphysics, reasoning upon the hardship of a lot which can not realize all it wishes: wondering why such simple blessings are refused, pondering deeply on Divine decrees, ending perhaps in skepticism. Mary was saved from this. She could not understand, but she could trust and wait. Not for one moment did a shade of doubt rest upon her heart. At once and instantly, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And so, too, the Syrophenician woman was not driven to speculate on the injustice of her destiny by the seeming harshness of Christ's reply. She drew closer to her Lord in prayer. Affection and submissiveness saved them both from doubt. True women both.

Now there are whole classes of our fellow-creatures to whom, as a class, the anguish of religious doubt never or rarely comes. Mental doubt rarely touches women. Soldiers and sailors do not doubt. Their religion is remarkable for its simplicity and childlike character. Scarcely ever are religious warriors tormented with skepticism or doubts. And in all, I believe, for the same reason—the habits of feeling to which the long life of obedience trains the soul. Prompt, quick, unquestioning obedience: that is the soil for faith.

I call this, therefore, the glory of womanhood. It is the true glory of human beings to obey. It is her special glory, rising out of the very weakness of her nature—God's strength made perfect in weakness. England will not soon forget that lesson left her as the bequest of a great life. Her buried Hero's glory came out of that which was manliest in his character—the Virgin's spirit of obedience.

The second glory resulting from it is prevailing power with God. Her wish was granted. "What have I to do with thee," were words that only asserted His own perfect independence. They were not the language of rebuke. As Messiah He gently vindicated His acts from interference, showing the filial relation to be in its first strictness dissolved. But as Son He obeyed, or to speak more properly, complied. Nay, probably His look had said that already, promising more than His words, setting her mind at rest, and granting the favor she desired.

Brethren, the subject of prayer is a deep mystery. To the masculine intellect it is a demonstrable absurdity. For says logic, how can man's will modify the will of God, or alter the fixed decree? And if it can not, wherein lies the use of prayer? But there is a something mightier than intellect and truer than logic. It is the faith which works by love—the conviction that in this world of mystery, that which can not be put in words, nor defended by argument, may yet be true. The will of Christ was fixed, what could be the use of intercession? and yet the Virgin's feeling was true; she felt her prayer would prevail.

Here is a grand paradox, which is the paradox of all prayer. The heart hopes that which to reasoning seems impossible. And I believe we never pray aright except when we pray in that feminine childlike spirit which no logic can defend, feeling *as if* we modified the will of God, though that will is fixed. It is the glory of the spirit that is affectionate and submissive that it, ay and it alone, *can* pray, because it alone can believe that its prayer will be granted; and it is the glory of that spirit, too, that its prayer will be granted.

3. In all Christian ages the especial glory ascribed to the

Virgin Mother is purity of heart and life. Implied in the term "Virgin." Gradually in the history of the Christian Church the recognition of this became idolatry. The works of early Christian art curiously exhibit the progress of this perversion. They show how Mariolatry grew up. The first pictures of the early Christian ages simply represent the woman. By-and-by we find outlines of the mother and the child. In an after-age the Son is seen sitting on a throne, with the mother crowned, but sitting as yet below Him. In an age still later, the crowned mother on a level with the Son. Later still, the mother on a throne *above* the Son. And lastly, a Romish picture represents the eternal Son in wrath, about to destroy the earth, and the Virgin Intercessor interposing, pleading by significant attitude her maternal rights, and redeeming the world from His vengeance. Such was, in fact, the progress of Virgin-worship. First the woman reverenced for the Son's sake; then the woman reverenced above the Son, and adored.

Now the question is, How came this to be? for we assume it as a principle that no error has ever spread widely that was not the exaggeration or perversion of a truth. And be assured that the first step towards dislodging error is to understand the truth at which it aims. Never can an error be permanently destroyed by the roots, unless we have planted by its side the truth that is to take its place. Else you will find the falsehood returning forever, growing up again when you thought it cut up root and branch, appearing in the very places where the crushing of it seemed most complete. Wherever there is a deep truth, unrecognized, misunderstood, it will force its way into men's hearts. It will take pernicious forms if it can not find healthful ones. It will grow as some weeds grow, in noxious forms, ineradicably, because it has a root in human nature.

Else how comes it to pass, after three hundred years of reformation, we find Virgin-worship restoring itself again in this reformed England, where least of all countries we should expect it, and where the remembrance of Romish persecution might have seemed to make its return impossible? How comes it that some of the deepest thinkers of our day, and men of the saintliest lives, are feeling this Virgin-worship a necessity for their souls; for it is *the* doctrine to which the converts to Romanism cling most tenaciously?

Brethren, I reply, Because the doctrine of the worship of the Virgin has a root in truth, and no mere cutting and uprooting can destroy it: no thunders of Protestant oratory: no platform expositions: no Reformation societies. In one word, no mere negations; nothing but the full liberation of the truth which lies at the root of error can eradicate error.

Surely we ought to have learnt that truth by this time. Recollect how, before Christ's time, mere negations failed to uproot paganism. Philosophers had disproved it by argument: satirists had covered it with ridicule. It was slain a thousand times, and yet paganism lived on in the hearts of men: and those who gave it up returned to it again in a dying hour, because the disprovers of it had given nothing for the heart to rest on in its place. But when Paul dared to proclaim of paganism what we are proclaiming of Virgin-worship, that paganism stood upon a truth, and taught that truth, paganism fell forever. The Apostle Paul found in Athens an altar to the unknown God. He did not announce in Athens lectures against heathen priestcraft; nor did he undertake to prove it, in the Areopagus, all a mystery of iniquity, and a system of damnable idolatries—that is the mode in which we set about *our* controversies; but he disengaged the truth from the error, proclaimed the truth, and left the errors to themselves. The truth grew up, and the errors silently and slowly withered.

I pray you, Christian brethren, do not join those fierce associations which think only of uprooting error. There is a spirit in them which is more of earth than heaven, shortsighted too and self-destructive. They do not make converts to Christ, but only controversialists, and adherents to a party. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte. It matters little whether fierce Romanism or fierce Protestantism wins the day: but it does matter whether or not in the conflict we lose some precious Christian truth, as well as the very spirit of Christianity.

What lies at the root of this ineradicable Virgin-worship? How comes it that out of so few Scripture sentences about her, many of them like this rebuke, depreciatory, learned men and pious men could ever have *developed*, as they call it, or as it seems to us, tortured and twisted a doctrine of Divine honors to be paid to Mary? Let us set out with the conviction that there must have been some reason for it, some truth of which it is the perversion.

I believe the truth to be this. Before Christ the qualities honored as Divine were peculiarly the virtues of the man: courage, wisdom, truth, strength. But Christ proclaimed the Divine nature of qualities entirely opposite: meekness, obedience, affection, purity. He said that the pure in heart should see God. He pronounced the beatitudes of meekness, and lowliness, and poverty of spirit. Now observe these were all of the order of graces which are distinctively feminine. And it is the peculiar feature of Christianity that it exalts not strength nor intellect, but gentleness, and lovingness, and virgin purity.

Here was a new, strange thought given to the world. It was for many ages *the* thought: no wonder—it was the one great novelty of the revealed religion. How were men to find expression for that idea which was working in them, vague and beautiful, but wanting substance? the idea of the Divineness of what is pure, above the Divineness of what is strong? Would you have had them say simply, we had forgotten these things; now they are revealed—now we know that love and purity are as Divine as power and reason? My brethren, it is not so that men *worship*—it is only so that men *think*. They think about qualities—they worship *persons*. Worship must have a form. Adoration finds a person, and if it can not find one it will imagine one. Gentleness and purity are words for a philosopher; but a man whose heart wants something to adore will find for himself a gentle *one*, a pure *one*, incarnate purity and love, gentleness robed in flesh and blood, before whom his knee may bend, and to whom the homage of his spirit can be given. You can not adore except a person.

What marvel if the early Christian found that the Virgin-mother of our Lord embodied this great idea? What marvel if he filled out and expanded with that idea which was in his heart, the brief sketch given of her in the Gospels, till his imagination had robed the woman of the Bible with the majesty of the mother of God? Can we not *feel* that it must have been so? Instead of a dry, formal dogma of theology, the Romanist presented an actual woman, endued with every inward grace and beauty, and pierced by sorrows, as a living object of devotion, faith, and hope—a personality instead of an abstraction. Historically speaking, it seems inevitable that the idea could scarcely have been expressed to the world except through an idolatry.

Brethren, it is an idolatry: in modern Romanism a pernicious and most defiling one. The worship of Mary overshadows the worship of the Son. The love given to her is so much taken from Him. Nevertheless, let us not hide from ourselves the eternal truth of the idea that lies beneath the temporary falsehood of the dogma. Overthrow the idolatry; but do it by substituting the truth.

Now the truth which alone can supplant the worship of the Virgin is the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. I say the perfect *humanity:* for perfect manhood is a very ambiguous expression. By man we sometimes mean the human race, made up of man and woman, and sometimes we only mean the masculine sex. We have only one word to express both ideas. The language in which the New Testament was written has two. Hence we may make a great mistake. When the Bible speaks of man the human being, we may think that it means man the male creature. When the Bible tells us Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, it uses the word which implies human being: it does not use the word which signifies one of the male sex: it does not dwell on the fact that He was *a* man: but it earnestly asserts that He was Man. Son of a man He was not. Son of Man He was: for the blood, as it were, of all the race was in His veins.

Now let us see what is implied in this expression Son of Man. It contains in it the doctrine of the incarnation: it means the full humanity of Christ. Lately I tried to bring out one portion of its meaning. I said that He belonged to no particular age, but to every age. He had not the qualities of one clime or race, but that which is common to all climes and all races. He was not the Son of the Jew, nor the Son of the Oriental—He was the Son of Man. He was not the villager of Bethlehem: nor one whose character and mind were the result of a certain training, peculiar to Judea, or peculiar to that century—but He was *the Man.* This is what St. Paul insists on, when He says that in Him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. A humanity in which there is nothing distinctive, limited, or peculiar, but universal—your nature and mine, the humanity in which we all are brothers, bond or free. Now in that same passage St. Paul uses another very remarkable expression: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female." That is the other thing implied in His title to the Son of Man. His nature had in it the nature of all nations: but also His heart had in it the blended qualities of both sexes. Our humanity is a whole made up of two opposite poles of character—the manly and the feminine. In the character of Christ neither was found exclusively, but both in perfect balance. He was the Son of Man—the Human Being—perfect Man.

There was in Him the woman-heart as well as the manly brain—all that was most manly, and all that was most womanly. Remember what He was in life: recollect His stern iron hardness in the temptation of the desert: recollect the calmness that never quailed in all the uproars of the people, the truth that never faltered, the strict severe integrity which characterized the Witness of the Truth: recollect the justice that never gave way to weak feeling—which let the rich young ruler go his way to perish if he would—which paid the tribute-money—which held the balance fair between the persecuted woman and her accuser, but did not suffer itself to be betrayed by sympathy into any feeble tenderness—the justice that rebuked Peter with indignation, and pronounced the doom of Jerusalem unswervingly. Here is one side or pole of human character—surely not the feminine side. Now look at the other. Recollect the twice-recorded tears, which a man would have been ashamed to show, and which are never beautiful in man except when joined with strength like His: and recollect the sympathy craved and yearned for as well as given—the shrinking from solitude in prayer—the trembling of a sorrow unto death—the considerate care which provided bread for the multitude, and said to the tired disciples, as with a sister's rather than a brother's thoughtfulness, "Come ye apart into the desert and rest a while." This is the other side or pole of human character—surely not the masculine.

When we have learnt and felt what is meant by Divine humanity in Christ, and when we have believed it, not in a one-sided way, but in all its fullness, then we are safe from Mariolatry—because we do not want it: we have the truth which Mariolatry labors to express, and, laboring ignorantly, falls into idolatry. But so long as the male was looked upon as the only type of God, and the masculine virtues as the only glory of His character, so long the truth was yet unrevealed. This was the state of heathenism. And so long as Christ was only felt as the Divine Man, and not the Divine Humanity, so long the world had only a one-sided truth.

One-half of our nature, the sterner portion of it, only was felt to be of God and in God. The other half, the tenderer and the purer qualities of our souls, were felt as earthly. This was the state of Romanism from which men tried to escape by Mariolatry. And if men had not learned that this side of our nature too was made divine in Christ, what possible escape was there for them, but to look to the Virgin Mary as the incarnation of the purer and lovelier elements of God's character, reserving to her Son the sterner and the more masculine?

Can we not understand, too, how it came to pass that the mother was placed above the Son, and adored more? Christianity had proclaimed meekness, purity, obedience, as more Divine than strength and wisdom. What wonder if she who was gazed on as the type of purity should be reckoned more near to God than He who had come through misconception to be looked on chiefly as the type of Strength and Justice?

There is a spirit abroad which is leading men to Rome. Do not call that the spirit of the Devil. It is the desire and hope to find there in its tenderness, and its beauty, and its devotion, a home for those feelings of awe, and contemplation, and love, for which our stern Protestantism finds no shelter. Let us acknowledge that what they worship is indeed deserving of all adoration: only let us say that *what* they worship ignorantly is Christ. Whom they ignorantly worship let us declare unto them: Christ their unknown God, worshipped at an idol-altar. Do not let us satisfy ourselves by saying as a watchword, "Christ, not Mary:" say rather, "In Christ all that they find in Mary." The mother in the Son, the womanly in the soul of Christ. Divine honor to the feminine side of His character, joyful and unvarying acknowledgment that in Christ there is a revelation of the Divineness of submission, and love, and purity, and long-suffering, just as there was before in the name of the Lord of Hosts a revelation of the Divineness of courage, and strength, and heroism, and manliness.

Therefore it is we do not sympathize with those coarse expositions which aim at doing exclusive honor to the Son of God by degrading the life and character of the Virgin. Just as the Romanist has loved to represent all connection with her as mysterious and immaculate, so has the Protestant been disposed to vulgarize her to the level of the commonest humanity, and exaggerate into rebukes the reverent expressions to her in which Jesus merely asserted His Divine independence.

Rather reverence, not her, but that idea and type which Christianity has given in her—the type of Christian womanhood; which was not realized in her, which never was and never will be realized in one single woman—which remains ever a Divine Idea, after which each living woman is to strive.

And when I say reverence that idea or type, I am but pointing to the relation between the mother and the Son, and asking men to reverence that which He reverenced. Think we that there is no meaning hidden in the mystery that the Son of God was the Virgin's Son? To Him through life there remained the early recollections of a pure mother. Blessed beyond all common blessedness is the man who can look back to that. God has given to him a talisman which will carry him triumphant through many a temptation. To other men purity may be a name; to him it has been once a fealty. "Faith in all things high beats with his blood." He may be tempted: he may err: but there will be a light from home shining forever on his path inextinguishably. By the grace of God, degraded he can not be.

XVIII.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

II. THE GLORY OF THE DIVINE SON.

"'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."—John ii. 11.

In the history of this miracle two personages are brought prominently before our notice. One is the Virgin Mary; the other is the Son of God. And these two exhibit different orders of glory, as well as different degrees. Different degrees, for the Virgin was only human: her Son was God manifest in the flesh. Different orders of glory, for the one exhibited the distinctive glory of womanhood: the Other manifested forth *His* glory—the glory of perfect manhood.

Taking the Virgin as the type and representative of her sex, we found the glory of womanhood, as exhibited by her conduct in this parable, to consist in unselfish considerateness about others, in delicacy of tact, in the power of ennobling a ministry of coarse and household things, like the wine of the marriage-feast, by the sanctity of affection: in meekness, and lowly obedience, which was in the Fall her curse, in Christ become her glory, transformed into a blessing and a power: and lastly, as the name Virgin implies, the distinctive glory of womanhood we found to consist in purity.

Now the Christian history first revealed these great truths. The Gospels which record the life of Christ, first, in the history of the world, brought to light the Divine glory of those qualities which had been despised. Before Christ came, the heathen had counted for Divine the legislative wisdom of the man, manly strength, manly truth, manly justice, manly courage. The life and the cross of Christ shed a splendor from heaven upon a new and till then unheard-of order of heroism—that which may be called the feminine order, meekness, endurance, long-suffering, the passive strength of martyrdom. For Christianity does not say, Honor to the wise, but "Blessed are the meek." Not, Glory to the strong, but "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Not, "The Lord is a man of war, Jehovah is His name," but "God is Love." In Christ not intellect, but love, is consecrated. In Christ is magnified, not force of will, but the glory of a Divine humility. "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: *wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him."

Therefore it was, that from that time forward womanhood assumed a new place in this world. She in whom these qualities, for the first time declared Divine in Christ, were the distinctive characteristics, steadily and gradually rose to a higher dignity in human life. It is not to a mere civilization, but to the spirit of life in Christ, that woman owes all she has, and all she has yet to gain.

Now the outward phases in which this redemption of the sex appeared to the world have been as yet chiefly three. There have been three ages through which these great truths of the Divineness of purity, and the strength and glory of obedience, the peculiar characteristics of womanhood, have been rising into their right acknowledgment. 1. The ages of Virgin-worship. 2. The ages of chivalry. 3. The age of the three last centuries. Now during these three Protestant centuries, the place and destinies of womanhood have been every year rising more and more into great questions. Her mission, as it is called in the cant language of the day—what it is—that is one of the subjects of deepest interest in the controversies of the day. And unless we are prepared to say that the truth which has been growing clearer and brighter for eighteen centuries shall stop now exactly where it is, and grow no clearer: unless we are ready to affirm that mankind will never learn to pay less glory to strength and intellect, and more to meekness, and humbleness, and pureness than they do now, it follows that God has yet reserved for womanhood a larger and more glorious field for her peculiar qualities and gifts, and that the truth contained in the Virgin's motherhood is unexhausted still.

For this reason, in reference to that womanhood and its destinies of which St. Mary is the type, I thought it needful, last Sunday, to insist on two things as of profound importance.

I. To declare in what her true glory consists. The only glory of the Virgin was the glory of true womanhood. The glory of true womanhood consists in being *herself:* not in striving to be something else. It is the false paradox and heresy of this present age to claim for her as a glory the right to leave her sphere. Her glory lies *in* her sphere, and God has given her a sphere distinct; as in the Epistle to the Church of Corinth, when in that wise chapter St. Paul rendered unto womanhood the things which were woman's, and unto manhood the things which were man's.

And the true correction of that monstrous rebellion against what is natural lies in vindicating Mary's glory, on the one side, from the Romanist, who gives to her the glory of God; and on the other from those who would confound the distinctive glories of the two sexes, and claim as the glory of woman what is, in the deeps of nature, the glory of the man.

Every thing is created in its own order. Every created thing has its own glory. "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." There is one glory of manhood, and another glory of womanhood. And the glory of each created thing consists in being true to its own nature, and moving in its own sphere.

Mary's glory was not immaculate origin, nor immaculate life, nor exaltation to Divine honors. She had none of these things. Nor, on the other hand, was it force or demanded rights, social or domestic, that constituted her glory. But it was the glory of simple womanhood; the glory of being true to the nature assigned her by her Maker; the glory of motherhood; the glory of "a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." She was not the queen of heaven, but she was something nobler still, a creature content to be what God had made her: in unselfishness, and humbleness, and purity, "rejoicing in God her Saviour," content that "He had regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden."

The second thing upon which I insisted was, that the only safeguard against the idolatrous error of Virgin-worship is a full recognition of the perfect humanity of Christ. *A full* recognition: for it is only a partial acknowledgment of the meaning of the incarnation when we think of Him as the Divine Man. It was not manhood, but humanity, that was made Divine in Him. Humanity has its two sides: one side in the strength and intellect of manhood; the other in the tenderness, and faith, and submissiveness of womanhood: Man and woman, not man alone, make up human nature. In Christ not one alone but both were glorified. Strength and grace, wisdom and love, courage and purity, Divine manliness: Divine womanliness. In all noble characters you find the two blended: in Him, the noblest, blended into one entire and perfect humanity.

Unless you recognize and fully utter this whole truth, you will find Mariolatry forever returning, cut it down as you will. It must come back. It will come back. I had well nigh said it *ought* to come back, unless we preach and believe the full truth of God incarnate in humanity. For while we teach in our classical schools as the only manliness, Pagan heroism of warrior and legislator, can we say that we are teaching both sides of Christ? Our souls were trained in boyhood to honor the heroic and the masculine. Who ever hinted to us that charity is the "more excellent way?" Who suggested that "he which ruleth his spirit is greater than he which taketh a city?"

Again, we find our English society divided into two sections: one the men of business and action, exhibiting prominently the masculine virtues of English character, truth and honor, and almost taught to reckon forbearance and feeling as proofs of weakness; taught in the playground to believe that a chaste life is romance; false sentiment and strengthlessness of character taught there: and in after-life that it is mean to forgive a personal affront.

The other section of our society is made up of men of prayer and religiousness: for some reason or other singularly deficient in masculine breadth and strength, and even truthfulness of character: with no firm footing upon reality, not daring to look the real problems of social and political life in the face, but wasting their strength in disputes of words, or shrinking into a dim atmosphere of ecclesiastical dreaminess, unreal and effeminate. Dare we say that the full humanity of Christ in its double aspect is practically adored amongst us? Have we not made a fatal separation between the manly and the feminine sides of character? between the moral and the devout? so that we have men who are masculine and moral, and also men who are effeminate and devout. But where are our Christian men in whom the whole Christ is formed—all that is brave, and true, and wise, and at the same time all that is tender, and devout, and pure? Who ever taught us to adore in Christ all that is most manly, and all that is most womanly, that we might strive to be such in our degree ourselves? And if not, can you wonder that men, feeling their Christianity imperfect, blindly strive to patch it up through Mariolatry?

I gather into a few sentences the substance of what was said last Sunday. I said that Christianity exhibited the Divine glory of the weaker elements of our human nature.

Heathenism, nay even Judaism, had as yet before him only recognized the glory of the stronger and masculine. Now the Romanist personified the masculine side of human nature in Christ. He personified gentleness and purity, the feminine side of human nature, in the Virgin Mary. No wonder that with this cardinal error at the outset in his conceptions, he adored; and no wonder, since Christianity declared meekness and purity more Divine than strength and intellect, in process of time he came to honor the Virgin more than Christ. That I believe is the true history and account of Virgin-worship.

The Bible personifies both sides of human nature, the masculine and feminine, in Christ, of whom St. Paul declares in the Epistle to the Galatians, "In Him is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female." Neither *distinctively*, for in him both the manly and the womanly sides of character divinely meet. I say therefore that the incarnation of God in Christ is the true defense against Virgin-worship.

Think of Christ only as the masculine character, glorified by the union of Godhead with it, and your Christianity has in it an awful gap, a void, a want—the inevitable supply and relief to which will be Mariolatry, however secure you may think yourself; however strong and fierce the language you now use. Men who have used language as strong and fierce have become idolaters of Mary. With a half thought of Christ, safe you are not. But think of him as the Divine Human Being, in whom both sides of our double being are divine and glorified, and then you have the truth which Romanism has marred and perverted into an idolatry pernicious in all; in the less spiritual worshippers sensualizing and debasing.

Now there are two ways of meeting error. The one is that in which, in humble imitation of Christ and His apostles, I have tried to show you the error of the worship of Mary—to discern the truth out of which the error sprung, firmly asserting the truth, forbearing threatening; certain that he in whose mind the truth is lodged has in that truth the safeguard against error.

The other way of meeting error is to overwhelm it with threats. To some men it seems the only way in which true zeal is shown. Well, it is very easy, requiring no self-control, but only an indulgence of every bad passion. It is very easy to call Rome the "mother of harlots and abominations" —very easy to use strong language about "damnable idolatries"—very easy for the apostles to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans because they would not receive

Christ, and then to flatter themselves that that was godly zeal. But it might be well for us to remember his somewhat startling comment, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." There are those who think it a surer and a safer Protestantism to use those popular watchwords. Be it so. But with God's blessing, that will not I. The majesty of truth needs other bulwarks than vulgar and cowardly vituperation. Coarse and violent language, excusable three hundred years ago by the manners of that day, was bold and brave in the lips of the Reformers, with whom the struggle was one of life and death, and who might be called to pay the penalty of their bold defiances with their blood. But the same fierceness of language now, when there is no personal risk in the use of it, in the midst of hundreds of men and women ready to applaud and honor violence as zeal, is simply a dastardliness from which every generous mind shrinks. You do not get the Reformers' spirit by putting on the armor they have done with, but by risking the dangers which those noble warriors risked. It is not their big words, but their large, brave heart that makes the Protestant. Oh, be sure that he whose soul has anchored itself to rest on the deep calm sea of truth, does not spend his strength in raving against those who are still tossed by the winds of error. Spasmodic violence of words is one thing, strength of conviction is another.

When, oh when, shall we learn that loyalty to Christ is tested far more by the strength of our sympathy with truth than by the intensity of our hatred of error? I will tell you what to hate. Hate hypocrisy—hate cant—hate intolerance, oppression, injustice—hate Pharisaism—hate them as Christ hated them, with a deep, living, Godlike hatred. But do not hate men in intellectual error. To hate a man for his errors is as unwise as to hate one who in casting up an account has made an error against himself. The Romanist has made an error against himself. He has missed the full glory of his Lord and Master. Well, shall we hate him, and curse, and rant, and thunder at him? Or, shall we sit down beside him, and try to sympathize with him, and see things from his point of view, and strive to understand the truth which his soul is aiming at, and seize the truth for him and for ourselves, "meekly instructing those who oppose themselves?"

Our subject to-day is the glory of the Divine Son. In that miracle "He manifested forth his glory." Concerning that glory we say:—

1. The glory of Christ did not *begin* with that miracle: the miracle only *manifested* it. For thirty years the wonder

working power had been in Him. It was not Diviner power when it broke forth into visible manifestation than it had been when it was unsuspected and unseen. It had been exercised up to this time in common acts of youthful life: obedience to His mother, love to His brethren. Well, it was just as Divine in those simple, daily acts, as when it showed itself in a way startling and wonderful. It was just as much the life of God on earth when He did an act of ordinary human love or human duty, as when He did an extraordinary act, such as turning water into wine. God was as much, nay more, in the daily life and love of Christ, than he was in Christ's miracles. The miracle only made the hidden glory visible. The extraordinary only proved that the ordinary was Divine That was the very object of the miracle. It was done to *manifest forth* his glory. And if, instead of rousing men to see the real glory of Christ in His other life, the miracle merely fastened men's attention on itself, and made them think that the only glory which is Divine is to be found in what is wonderful and uncommon, then the whole intention of the miracle was lost.

Let us make this more plain by an illustration. To the wise man, the lightning only manifests the electric force which is everywhere, and which for one moment has become visible. As often as he sees it, it reminds him that the lightning slumbers invisibly in the dew-drop, and in the mist, and in the cloud, and binds together every atom of the water that he uses in daily life. But to the vulgar mind the lightning is something unique, a something which has no existence but when it appears. There is a fearful glory in the lightning because he sees it. But there is no startling glory and nothing fearful in the drop of dew, because he does not know, what the thinker knows, that the flash is there in all its terrors. So, in the same way, to the half believer a miracle is the one solitary evidence of God. Without it he could have no certainty of God's existence.

But to the true disciple a miracle only *manifests* the power and love which are silently at work everywhere—as truly and as really in the slow work of the cure of the insane, as in the sudden expulsion of the legion from the demoniac—as divinely in the gift of daily bread as in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves. God's glory is at work in the growth of the vine and the ripening of the grape, and the process by which grape-juice passes into wine. It is not *more* glory, but only glory more *manifested*, when water at his bidding passes at once into wine. And be sure that if you do not feel as David felt, God's presence in the annual miracle, that it is

God, which in the vintage of every year causeth wine to make glad the heart of man, the sudden miracle at Capernaum would not have given you conviction of His presence. "If you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will you be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Miracles have only done their work when they teach us the glory and the awfulness that surround our common life. In a miracle, God for one moment shows Himself that we may remember it is He that is at work when no miracle is seen.

Now this is the deep truth of miracles which most men miss. They believe that the life of Jesus was Divine, because He wrought miracles. But if their faith in miracles were shaken, their faith in Christ would go. If the evidence for the credibility of those miracles were weakened, then to them the mystic glory would have faded off His history They could not be sure that His existence was Divine. That love, even unto death, would bear no certain stamp of God upon it. That life of long self-sacrifice would have had in it no certain unquestionable traces of the Son of God.

See what that implies. If that be true, and miracles are the best proof of Christ's mission, God can be recognized only in what is marvellous: God can not be recognized in what is good. It is by Divine power that a human Being turns water into wine. It is by power less certainly Divine that the same Being witnesses to truth—forgives His enemies—makes it His meat and drink to do His Father's will, and finishes His work. We are more sure that God was in Christ when he said, "Rise up, and walk," than when He said with absolving love, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee:" more certain when He furnished wine for wedding-guests, than when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, a strange, and low, and vulgar appreciation this of the true glory of the Son of God; the same false conception that runs through all our life, appearing in every form—God in the storm, and the earthquake, and the fire—no God in the still small voice. Glory in the lightning-flash—no glory and no God in the lowliness of the dew-drop. Glory to intellect and genius—no glory to gentleness and patience. Glory to every kind of *power*—none to the inward, invisible strength of the life of God in the soul of man.

"An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Look at the feverish eagerness with which men crowd to every exhibition of some newly-discovered force, real or pretended. What lies at the bottom of this feverishness but an unbelieving craving after signs? some wonder which is to show them the Divine life of which the evidence is yet imperfect? As if the bread they eat and the wine they drink, chosen by God for the emblems of His sacraments because the commonest things of daily life, were not filled with the presence of His love; as if God were not around their path and beside their bed, and spying out all their daily ways.

It is in this strange way that we have learned Christ. The miracles which were meant to point us to the Divinity of His goodness, have only dazzled us with the splendor of their power. We have forgotten what His first wonder-work shows, that a miracle is only *manifested* glory.

2. It was the glory of Christ, again, to sanctify, *i. e.*, declare the sacredness of, all things natural — all natural relationships, all natural enjoyments.

All natural relationships. What He sanctified by His presence was a marriage. Now remember what had gone before this. The life of John the Baptist was the highest form of religious life known in Israel. It was the life ascetic. It was a life of solitariness and penitential austerity. He drank no wine: he ate no pleasant food: he married no wife: he entered into no human relationship. It was the law of that stern and in its way sublime life, to cut out every human feeling as a weakness, and to mortify every natural instinct, in order to cultivate an intenser spirituality. A life in its own order grand, but indisputably unnatural.

Now the first public act of our Redeemer's life is to go with His disciples to a marriage. He consecrates marriage, and the sympathies which lead to marriage. He declares the sacredness of feelings which had been reckoned carnal, and low, and human. He stamped His image on human joys, human connections, human relationships. He pronounces that they are more than human—as it were sacramental: the means whereby God's presence comes to us; the types and shadows whereby higher and deeper relationships become possible to us. For it is through our human affections that the soul first learns to feel that its destiny is divine: It is through a mortal yearning, unsatisfied, that the spirit ascends, seeking a higher object: It is through the gush of our human tenderness that the immortal and the infinite in us reveals itself. Never does a man know the force that is in him till some mighty affection or grief has humanized the soul. It is by an earthly relationship that God has typified to us and helped us to conceive the only true espousal—the marriage of the soul to her eternal Lord.

It was the glory of Christianity to pronounce all these human feelings sacred: therefore it is that the Church asserts their sacredness in a religious ceremony; for example, that of marriage. Do not mistake. It is not the ceremony that makes a thing religious: a ceremony can only *declare* a thing religious. The Church can not make sacred that which is not sacred: she is but here on earth as the moon, the witness of the light in heaven; by her ceremonies and by her institutions to bear witness to eternal truths. She can not by her manipulations manufacture a child of the devil, through baptism, into a child of God: she can only authoritatively declare the sublime truth—he is *not* the devil's child, but God's child by right. She can not make the bond of marriage sacred and indissoluble: she can only witness to the sacredness of that which the union of two spirits has already made: and such are her own words. Her minister is commanded by her to say—"Forasmuch as these two persons have *consented together*," there is the sacred fact of nature, "I pronounce that they be man and wife"—here is the authoritative witness to the fact.

Again, it was His glory to declare the sacredness of all natural enjoyments. It was not a marriage only, but a marriage-*feast*, to which Christ conducted His disciples. Now we can not get over this plain fact by saying that it was a religious ceremony: that would be mere sophistry. It was an indulgence in the festivity of life; as plainly as words can describe, here was a banquet of human enjoyment. The very language of the master of the feast about men who had well drunk, tells us that there had been, not excess of course, but happiness there and merry-making.

Neither can we explain away the lesson by saying that it is no example to us, for Christ was there to do good, and that what was safe for Him might be unsafe for us. For if His life is no pattern for us here in this case of accepting an invitation, in what can we be sure it *is* a pattern? Besides, He took His disciples there, and His mother was there: they were not shielded, as He was, by immaculate purity. He was there as a guest at first, as Messiah only afterwards: thereby He declared the sacredness of natural enjoyments.

Here again, then, Christ manifested His peculiar glory. The temptation of the wilderness was past: the baptism of John, and the life of abstinence to which it introduced, were over; and now the Bridegroom comes before the world in the true glory of Messiah—not in the life of asceticism, but in the life of Godliness—not separating from life, but consecrating it; carrying a Divine spirit into every simplest act—accepting an invitation to a feast—giving to water the virtue of a nobler beverage. For Christianity does not destroy what is natural, but ennobles it. To turn water into wine, and what is common into what is holy, is indeed the glory of Christianity.

The ascetic life of abstinence, of fasting, austerity, singularity, is the lower and earthlier form of religion. The life of Godliness is the glory of Christ. It is a thing far more striking to the vulgar imagination to be religious after the type and pattern of John the Baptist, to fast, to mortify every inclination, to be found at no feast, to wrap ourselves in solitariness, and abstain from all social joys: yes, and far *easier* so to live, and far easier *so* to win a character for religiousness. A silent man is easily reputed wise. A man who suffers none to see him in the common jostle and undress of life, easily gathers round him a mysterious veil of unknown sanctity, and men honor him for a saint. The unknown is always wonderful. But the life of Him whom men called "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," was a far harder and a far heavenlier religion.

To shroud ourselves in no false mist of holiness: to dare to show ourselves as we are, making no solemn affectation of reserve or difference from others: to be found at the marriage-feast: to accept the invitation of the rich Pharisee Simon, and the scorned publican Zaccheus: to mix with the crowd of men, using no affected singularity, content to be "creatures not too bright or good for human nature's daily food:" and yet for a man amidst it all to remain a consecrated spirit, his trials and his solitariness known only to his Father—a being set apart, not *of* this world, alone in the heart's deeps with God: to put the cup of this world's gladness to his lips, and yet be unintoxicated: to gaze steadily on all its grandeur, and yet be undazzled, plain and simple in personal desires: to feel its brightness, and yet defy its thrall:—this is the difficult, and rare, and glorious life of God in the soul of man. This, this was the peculiar glory of the life of Christ, which was manifested in that first miracle which Jesus wrought at the marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee.

XIX.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."—John x. 14, 15.

As these words stand in the English translation, it is hard to see any connection between the thoughts that are brought together.

It is asserted that Christ is the good Shepherd, and knows His sheep. It is also asserted that He knows the Father; but between these two truths there is no express connection. And again, it is declared that He lays down His life for the sheep. This follows directly after the assertion that He knows the Father. Again, we are at a loss to say what one of these truths has to do with the other.

But the whole difficulty vanishes with the alteration of a single stop and a single word. Let the words "even so" be exchanged for the word "and." Four times in these verses the same word occurs. Three times out of these four it is translated "and,"—*and* know my sheep, *and* am known, *and* I lay down my life. All that is required then is, that in consistency it shall be translated by the same word in the fourth case: for "even so" substitute "and:" then strike away the full stop after "mine," and read the whole sentence thus: "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine as the Father knoweth me, *and* as I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."

At once our Redeemer's thought becomes clear. There is a reciprocal affection between the Shepherd and the sheep. There is a reciprocal affection between the Father and the Son; and the one is the parallel of the other. The affection between the Divine Shepherd and His flock can be compared, for the closeness of its intimacy, with nothing but the affection between the Eternal Father and the Son of His love. As the Father knows the Son, so does the Shepherd know the sheep: as the Son knows the Father, so do the sheep know their heavenly Shepherd.

I. The pastoral character claimed by Christ.
II. The proofs which substantiate the claim.

I. The Son of Man claims to Himself the name of Shep herd. Now we shall not learn any thing from that, unless we enter humbly and affectionately into the spirit of Christ's teaching. It is the heart alone which can give us a key to His words. Recollect *how* He taught. By metaphors, by images, by illustrations, boldly figurative, in rich variety—yes, in daring abundance. He calls Himself a gate, a king, a vine, a shepherd, a thief in the night. In every one of these He appeals to certain feelings and associations. What He says can only be interpreted by such associations. They must be understood by a living heart: a cold, clear intellect will make nothing of them. If you take those glorious expressions, pregnant with almost boundless thought, and lay them down as so many articles of rigid, stiff theology, you turn life into death. It is just as if a chemist were to analyze a fruit or a flower, and then imagine that he had told you what a fruit and a flower are. He separates them into their elements, names them and numbers them: but those elements, weighed, measured, numbered in the exact proportions that made up the beautiful living thing, are not the living thing—no, nor any thing like it. Your science is very profound, no doubt; but the fruit is crushed, and the grace of the flower is gone.

It is in this way often that we deal with the words of Christ, when we anatomize them and analyze them. Theology is very necessary, chemistry is very necessary; but chemistry destroys life to analyze, murders to dissect; and theology very often kills religion out of words before it can cut them up into propositions.

Here is a living truth which our cold reasonings have often torn into dead fragments—"I am the good Shepherd." In this northern England it is hard to get the living associations of the East with which such an expression is full.

The pastoral life and duty in the East is very unlike that of the shepherds on our bleak hill-sides and downs. Here the connection between the shepherd and the sheep is simply one of pecuniary interest. Ask an English shepherd about his flock, he can tell you the numbers and the value; he knows the market in which each was purchased, and the remunerating price at which it can be disposed of. There is before him so much stock convertible into so much money.

Beneath the burning skies and the clear starry nights of Palestine there grows up between the shepherd and his flock an union of attachment and tenderness. It is the country where at any moment sheep are liable to be swept away by some mountain-torrent, or carried off by hill-robbers, or torn by wolves. At any moment their protector may have to save them by personal hazard. The shepherd-king tells us how, in defense of his father's flock, he slew a lion and a bear: and Jacob reminds Laban how, when he watched Laban's sheep in the day, the drought consumed. Every hour of the shepherd's life is risk. Sometimes for the sake of an armful of grass in the parched summer days, he must climb precipices almost perpendicular, and stand on a narrow ledge of rock where the wild goat will scarcely venture. Pitiless showers, driving snows, long hours of thirst—all this he must endure, if the flock is to be kept at all.

And thus there grows up between the man and the dumb creatures he protects, a kind of friendship. For this is, after all, the true school in which love is taught—dangers mutually shared and hardships borne together; these are the things which make generous friendship—risk cheerfully encountered for another's sake. You love those for whom you risk, and they love you; therefore it is that, not as here where the flock is driven, the shepherd goes before and the sheep follow him. They follow in perfect trust, even though he should be leading them away from a green pasture, by a rocky road, to another pasture which they can not yet see. He knows them all—their separate histories, their ailments, their characters.

Now let it be observed how much in all this connection there is of *heart*—of real, personal attachment, almost inconceivable to us. It is strange how deep the sympathy may become between the higher and the lower being: nay, even between the being that has life and what is lifeless. Alone almost in the desert, the Arab and his horse are one family. Alone in those vast solitudes, with no human being near, the shepherd and the sheep feel a life in common. Differences disappear, the vast interval between the man and the brute: the single point of union is felt strongly. One is the love of the protector: the other the love of the grateful life: and so between lives so distant there is woven by night and day, by summer suns and winter frosts, a living network of sympathy. The greater and the less mingle their being together: they feel each other. "The shepherd knows his sheep, and is known of them."

The men to whom Christ said these words felt all this and more, the moment He had said them, which it has taken me many minutes to draw out in dull sentences: for He appealed to the familiar associations of their daily life, and calling Himself a Shepherd, touched strings which would vibrate with many a tender and pure recollection of their childhood. And unless we try, by realizing such scenes, to supply what they felt by association, the words of Christ will be only hard, dry, lifeless words to us: for all Christ's teaching is a Divine poetry, luxuriant in metaphor, overflowing with truth too large for accurate sentences, truth which only a heart alive can appreciate. More than half the heresies into which Christian sects have blundered, have merely come from mistaking for dull prose what prophets and apostles said in those highest moments of the soul, when seraphim kindle the sentences of the pen and lip into poetry. "This is my body." Chill that into prose, and it becomes Transubstantiation. "I am the good Shepherd." In the dry and merciless logic of a commentary, trying laboriously to find out minute points of ingenious resemblance in which Christ is like a Shepherd, the glory and the tenderness of this sentence are dried up.

But try to feel, by imagining what the lonely Syrian shepherd must feel towards the helpless things which are the companions of his daily life, for whose safety he stands in jeopardy every hour, and whose value is measurable to him not by price, but by his own jeopardy, and then we have reached some notion of the love which Jesus meant to represent, that eternal tenderness which bends over us—infinitely lower though we be in nature—and knows the name of each and the trials of each, and thinks for each with a separate solicitude, and gave Itself for each with a sacrifice as special and a love as personal, as if in the whole world's wilderness there were none other but that one.

To the name Shepherd, Christ adds an emphatic word of much significance: "I am the *good* Shepherd." Good, not in the sense of benevolent, but in the sense of genuine, true born, of the real kind—just as wine of nobler quality is good compared with the cheaper sort, just as a soldier is good or noble who is a soldier in heart, and not a soldier by mere profession or for pay. It is the same word used by St. Paul when he speaks of a good, *i. e.*, a noble soldier of Christ. Certain peculiar qualifications make the genuine soldier—certain peculiar qualifications make the genuine or good shepherd.

Now this expression distinguishes the shepherd from two sorts of men who may also be keepers of the sheep: shepherds, but not shepherds of the true blood. 1. From robbers. 2. From hirelings.

1. Robbers may turn shepherds: they may keep the sheep, but they guard them only for their own purposes, simply for the flesh and fleece; they have not a true shepherd's heart, any more than a pirate has the true sailor's heart and the true sailor's loyalty. There were many such

marauders on the hills of Galilee and Judea: such, for example, as those from whom David and his band protected Nabal's flocks on Mount Carmel.

And many such nominal shepherds had the people of Israel had in by-gone years: rulers in whom the art of ruling had been but kingcraft; teachers whose instruction to the people had been but priestcraft. Government, statesmanship, teachership—these are pastoral callings—sublime, even Godlike. For only consider it: wise rule, chivalrous protection, loving guidance—what diviner work than these has the Master given to the shepherds of the people? But when the work is done, even well done, whether it be by statesmen or by pastors, for the sake of party or place, or honor, or personal consistency, or preferment, it is not the spirit of the genuine shepherd, but of the robber. No wonder He said, "All that ever came before Me were thieves and robbers."

2. Hirelings are shepherds, but not good shepherds, of the right pure kind: they are tested by danger. "He that is a hireling, and not the good shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep." Now a man is a hireling when he does his duty for pay. He may do it in his way faithfully. The paid shepherd would not desert the sheep for a shower or a cold night. But the lion and the bear—he is not paid to risk his life against them, and the sheep are not his, so he leaves them to their fate. So, in the same way, a man may be a hired priest, as Demetrius was at Ephesus: "By this craft we get our living." Or a paid demagogue, a great champion of rights, and an investigator of abuses—paid by applause; and while popularity lasts he will be a reformer—deserting the people when danger comes. There is no vital union between the champion and the defenseless—the teacher and the taught. The cause of the sheep is not *his* cause.

Exactly the reverse of this Christ asserts in calling Himself the *good* Shepherd. He is a good, genuine, or true-born sailor who feels that the ship is as it were his own; whose point of chivalrous honor is to save his ship rather than himself—not to survive her. He is a good, genuine, or true-born shepherd who has the spirit of his calling, is an enthusiast in it, has the true shepherd's heart, and makes the cause of the sheep his cause.

Brethren, the cause of man was the cause of Christ! He did no hireling's work. The only pay He got was hatred, a crown of thorns, and the cross. He might have escaped it all. He might have been the Leader of the people and their King. He might have converted the idolatry of an hour into the hosannas of a lifetime: if He would but have conciliated the Pharisees, instead of bidding them defiance and exasperating their bigotry against Him: if He would but have explained, and, like some demagogue called to account, trimmed away His sublime sharp-edged truths about oppression and injustice until they became harmless, because meaningless: if He would but have left unsaid those rough things about the consecrated temple and the sabbath-days: if He would but have left undisputed the hereditary title of Israel to God's favor, and not stung the national vanity by telling them that trust in God justifies the Gentile as entirely as the Jew: if He would but have taught less prominently that hateful doctrine of the salvability of the heathen Gentiles and the heretic Samaritans, and the universal Fatherhood of God: if he would but have stated with less angularity of edge His central truth—that not by mere compliance with law, but by a spirit transcending law, even the spirit of the cross and self-sacrifice, can the soul of man be atoned to God:—that would have saved Him. But that would have been the desertion of the cause—God's cause and man's—the cause of the ignorant defenseless sheep, whose very salvation depended on the keeping of that Gospel intact: therefore the Shepherd gave His life a witness to the truth, and a sacrifice to God. It was a profound truth that the populace gave utterance to, when they taunted Him on the cross: "He saved others, Himself He can not save." No, of course not; He that will save others *can not* save Himself.

Of that pastoral character He gives here three proofs. I know My sheep—am known of Mine—I lay down My life for the sheep.

I know my sheep, as the Father knoweth Me. In other words, as unerringly as His Father read His heart, so unerringly did He read the heart of man and recognize His own.

Ask we how? An easy reply, and a common one, would be—He recognized them by the Godhead in Him: His mind was Divine, therefore omniscient: He knew all things, therefore He knew what was in man: and therefore He knew His own. But we must not slur over His precious words in this way. That Divinity of His is made the pass-key by which we open all mysteries with fatal facility, and save ourselves from thinking of them. We get a dogma and cover truth with it: we satisfy ourselves with saying Christ was God, and lose the precious humanities of His heart and life.

There is here a deep truth of human nature, for he does not limit that recognizing power to Himself—He says that the sheep know Him as truly as He the sheep. He knew men on the same principle on which we know men—the same on which we know Him. The only difference is in degree: He knows with infinitely more unerringness than we, but the knowledge is the same in kind.

Let us think of this. There is a certain mysterious tact of sympathy and antipathy by which we discover the like and unlike of ourselves in others' character. You can not find out a man's opinions unless he chooses to express them; but his feelings and his character you may. He can not hide them: you feel them in his look and mein, and tones and motion. There is, for instance, a certain something in sincerity and reality which can not be mistaken—a certain something in real grief which the most artistic counterfeit can not imitate. It is distinguished by nature, not education. There is a something in an impure heart which purity detects afar off. Marvellous it is how innocence perceives the approach of evil which it can not know by experience, just as the dove which has never seen a falcon trembles by instinct at its approach; just as a blind man detects by finer sensitiveness the passing of the cloud which he can not see overshadowing the sun. It is wondrous how the truer we become the more unerringly we know the *ring* of truth, discern whether a man be true or not, and can fasten at once upon the rising lie in word and look, and dissembling act. Wondrous how the charity of Christ in the heart finely perceives the slightest aberration from charity in others, in ungentle thought or slanderous tone.

Therefore Christ knew His sheep by that mystic power always finest in the best natures, most developed in the highest, by which like detects what is like and what unlike itself. He was perfect love, perfect truth, perfect purity: therefore He knew what was in man, and felt, as by another sense, afar off the shadows of unlovingness, and falseness, and impurity.

No one can have read the Gospels without remarking that they ascribe to Him unerring skill in reading man. People, we read, began to show enthusiasm for Him. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, "for He knew what was in man." He knew that the flatterers of to-day would be the accusers of to-morrow. Nathanael stood before Him. He had scarcely spoken a word; but at once unhesitatingly, to Nathanael's own astonishment—"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" There came to Him a young man with vast possessions: a single sentence, an exaggerated epithet, an excited manner, revealed his character. Enthusiastic and amiable, Jesus loved him: capable of obedience, in life's sunshine and prosperity, ay, and capable of aspiration after something more than mere obedience, but not of sacrifice. Jesus tested him to the quick, and the young man failed. He did not try to call him back, for He knew what was in him and what was not. He read through Zaccheus when he climbed into the sycamore-tree, despised by the people as a publican, really a son of Abraham: through Judas, with his benevolent saying about the selling of the alabaster-box for the poor, and his false kiss: through the curses of the thief upon the cross, a faith that could be saved: through the zeal of a man who in a fit of enthusiasm offered to go with Him whithersoever He would. He read through the Pharisees, and His whole being shuddered with the recoil of utter and irreconcilable aversion.

It was as if His bosom was some mysterious mirror on which all that came near Him left a sullied or unsullied surface, detecting themselves by every breath.

Now distinguish that Divine power from that cunning sagacity which men call knowingness in the matter of character. The worldly-wise have maxims and rules; but the finer shades and delicacies of truth of character escape them. They would prudently avoid Zaccheus—a publican: they—

There is a very solemn aspect in which this power of Jesus to know man presents itself. It is this which qualifies Him for judgment—this perfection of human sympathy. Perfect sympathy with every most delicate line of good implies exquisite antipathy to every shadow of a shade of evil. God hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. On sympathy the final awards of heaven and hell are built: attraction and repulsion, the law of the magnet. To each pole all that has affinity with itself: *to* Christ all that is Christlike: *from* Christ all that is not Christlike—forever and forever. Eternal judgment is nothing more than the carrying out of these words, "I know my sheep:"—for the obverse of them is, "I never knew *you*, depart from me all ye that work iniquity."

The second proof which Christ alleges of the genuineness of His pastorate is that His sheep know *Him*.

How shall we recognize truth Divine? What is the test by which we shall know whether it comes from God or not? They tell us we know Christ to be from God because He wrought miracles; we know a doctrine to be from God because we find it written: or because it is sustained by an universal consent of fathers.

That is—for observe what this argument implies—there is something more evident than truth: Truth can not prove itself: we want something else to prove it. Our souls judge of truth—our senses judge of miracles; and the evidence of our senses—the lowest part of our nature—is more certain than the evidence of our souls, by which we must partake of God.

Now to say so is to say that you can not be sure that it is midday or morning sunshine unless you look at the sun-dial: you can not be sure that the sun is shining in the heavens unless you see his shadow on the dial-plate. The dial is valuable to a man who never reads the heavens—the shadow is good for him who has not watched the sun: but for a man who lives in perpetual contemplation of the sun in heaven, the sunshine needs no evidence, and every hour is known.

Now Christ says, "My sheep know *Me*." Wisdom is justified by her children. Not by some lengthened investigation, whether the shepherd's dress be the identical dress, and the staff and the crozier genuine, do the sheep recognize the shepherd. They know *him*, they hear his voice, they know him as a man knows his friend.

They know him, in short, *instinctively*. Just so does the soul recognize what is of God and true. Truth is like light: visible in itself, not distinguished by the shadows that it casts. There is a something in our souls of God, which corresponds with what is of God outside us, and recognizes it by direct intuition: something in the true soul which corresponds with truth and knows it to be truth. Christ came with truth, and the true recognize it as true: the sheep know the shepherd, wanting no further evidence. Take a few examples: "God is Love." "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "He that saveth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "All things are possible to him that believeth." "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." "God is a Spirit."

Now the wise men of intellect and logical acumen wanted proof of these truths. Give us, said they, your credentials. "By what authority doest thou these things?" They wanted a sign from heaven to prove that the truth was true, and the life He led, Godlike, and not devil-like. How can we be sure that it is not from Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that these deeds and sayings come? We must be quite sure that we are not taking a message from hell as one from heaven. Give us demonstration, chains of evidence—chapter and verse—authority.

But simple men had decided the matter already. They knew very little of antiquity, church authority, and shadows of coming events which prophecy casts before: but their eyes saw the light, and their hearts felt the present God. Wise Pharisees and learned doctors said, to account for a wondrous miracle, "Give God the glory." But the poor unlettered man, whose blinded eye had for the first time looked on a face of love, replied, "Whether this man be a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

The well-read Jews could not settle the literary question, whether the marks of his appearance coincided with the prophecies. But the Samaritans *felt* the life of God: "Now we believe, not because of thy word, but because we have heard Him ourselves and *know* that this is indeed the Christ."

The Shepherd had come, and the sheep knew his voice. Brethren, in all matters of eternal truth, the soul is before the intellect: the things of God are spiritually discerned. You know truth by being true: you recognize God by being like Him. The Scribe comes and says, I will prove to you that this is sound doctrine by chapter and verse, by what the old and best writers say, by evidence such as convinces the intellect of an intelligent lawyer or juryman. Think you the conviction of faith is got in that way?

Christ did not teach like the Scribes. He spoke His truth. He said, "If any man believe not, I judge him not; the word which I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." It was true, and the guilt of disbelieving it was not an error of the intellect but a sin of the heart. Let us stand upright: let us be sure that the test of truth is the soul within us. Not at second-hand can we have assurance of what is divine and what is not: only at first-hand. The sheep of Christ hear His voice.

The third proof given by Christ was pastoral fidelity: "I lay down my life for the sheep." Now here is the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice: the sacrifice of one instead of another; life saved by the sacrifice of another life.

Most of us know the meagre explanation of these words which satisfies the Unitarians: they say that Christ merely died as a martyr, in attestation of the truths He taught.

But you will observe the strength of the expression which we can not explain away, "I lay down my life for," *i. e*, instead of "the sheep." If the Shepherd had not sacrificed Himself, the sheep must have been the sacrifice.

Observe, however, the suffering of Christ was not the same suffering as that from which He saved us. The suffering of Christ was death. But the suffering from which He redeemed us by death was more terrible than death. The pit into which He descended was the grave. But the pit in which we should have been lost forever, was the pit of selfishness and despair.

Therefore St. Paul affirms, "If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your *sins*." If Christ's resurrection be a dream, and He be not risen from the grave of death, you are yet in the grave of guilt. He bore suffering to free us from what is worse than suffering—sin: temporal death to save us from death everlasting: His life given as an offering for sin to save the soul's eternal life.

Now in the text this sacrificing love of Christ is paralleled by the love of the Father to the Son. As He loved the sheep, so the Father had loved Him. Therefore the sacrifice of Christ is but a mirror of the love of God. The love of the Father to the Son is self-sacrificing love.

You know that shallow men make themselves merry with this doctrine. The sacrifice of God, they say, is a figment and an impossibility. Nevertheless this parallel tells us that it is one of the deepest truths of all the universe. It is the profound truth which the ancient fathers endeavored to express in the doctrine of the Trinity. For what is the love of the Father to the Son—Himself yet not Himself—but the grand truth of Eternal Love losing Itself and finding Itself again in the being of another? What is it but the sublime expression of the unselfishness of God?

It is a profound, glorious truth; I wish I knew how to put it in intelligible words. But if these words of Christ do not make it intelligible to the heart, how can any words of mine? The life of blessedness—the life of love—the life of sacrifice—the life of God, are identical. All love is sacrifice—the giving of life and self for others. God's life is sacrifice—for the Father loves the Son *as* the Son loves the sheep for whom He gave His life.

Whoever will humbly ponder upon this will, I think, understand the Atonement better than all theology can teach him. Oh, my brethren, leave men to quarrel as they will about the theology of the Atonement; here in these words is the religion of it—the blessed, all-satisfying religion for our hearts. The self-sacrifice of Christ was the *satisfaction* to the Father.

How could the Father be *satisfied* with the death of Christ, unless He saw in the sacrifice mirrored His own love?—for

God can be satisfied only with that which is perfect as Himself. Agony does not satisfy God—agony only satisfied Moloch. Nothing satisfies God but the voluntary sacrifice of love.

The pain of Christ gave God no pleasure—only the love that was tested by pain—the love of perfect obedience. He was obedient unto death.

XX.

THE DOUBT OF THOMAS.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—John xx. 29.

The day on which these words were spoken was the first day of the week. On that day Thomas received demonstration that his Lord was risen from the dead. On that same day a week before, Thomas had declared that no testimony of others, no eyesight of his own, nothing short of touching with his hands the crucifixion marks in his Master's body, should induce him to believe a fact so unnatural as the resurrection of a human being from the grave. Those seven days between must therefore have been spent in a state of miserable uncertainty. How miserable and how restless none can understand but those who have felt the wretchedness of earnest doubt.

Doubt moreover, observe, respecting all that is dear to a Christian's hopes. For if Christ were not risen, Christianity was false, and every high aspiration which it promised to gratify was thrown back on the disappointed heart.

Let us try to understand the doubt of Thomas. There are some men whose affections are stronger than their understandings: they feel more than they think. They are simple, trustful, able to repose implicitly on what is told them—liable sometimes to verge upon credulity and superstition, but take them all in all, perhaps the happiest class of minds: for it is happy to be without misgivings about the love of God and our own eternal rest in Him. "Blessed," said Christ to Thomas, "are they that have believed."

There is another class of men whose reflective powers are stronger than their susceptive: they think out truth—they do not feel it out. Often highly gifted and powerful minds, they can not rest till they have made all their grounds certain: they do not feel safe as long as there is one possibility of delusion left: they prove all things. Such a man was Thomas. He has well been called the rationalist among the apostles. Happy such men can not be. An anxious and inquiring mind dooms its possessor to unrest. But men of generous spirit, manly and affectionate, they may be: Thomas was. When Christ was bent on going to Jerusalem, to certain death, Thomas said, "Let us go up too, that we may die with him." And men of mighty faith they may become, if they are true to themselves and their convictions: Thomas did. When such men *do* believe, it is belief with all the heart and soul for life. When a subject has been once thoroughly and suspiciously investigated, and settled once for all, the adherence of the whole reasoning man, if given in at all, is given frankly and heartily as Thomas gave it—"My Lord, and my God."

Now this question of a resurrection which made Thomas restless, is the most anxious that can agitate the mind of man. So awful in its importance, and out of Christ so almost desperately dark in its uncertainty, who shall blame an earnest man severely if he crave the most indisputable proofs?

Very clearly Christ did not. Thomas asked of Christ a sign: he must put his own hands into the prints. His Master gave him that sign or proof. He said, "Reach hither thy hand." He gave it, it is true, with a gentle and delicate reproof—but He did give it. Now from that condescension we are reminded of the darkness that hangs round the question of a resurrection, and how excusable it is for a man to question earnestly until he has got proof to stand on. For if it were not excusable to crave a proof, our Master never would have granted one. Resurrection is not one of those questions on which you can afford to wait: it is the question of life and death. There are times when it does not weigh heavily. When we have some keen pursuit before us: when we are young enough to be satisfied to enjoy ourselves—the problem does not press itself. We are too laden with the pressure of the present to care to ask what is coming. But at last a time comes when we feel it will be all over soon—that much of our time is gone, and the rest swiftly going. And let a man be as frivolous as he will at heart, it is a question too solemn to be put aside—Whether he is going down into extinction and the blank of everlasting silence or not. Whether in those far ages, when the very oak which is to form his coffin shall have become fibres of black mould, and the church-yard in which he is to lie shall have become per haps unconsecrated ground, and the spades of a generation yet unborn shall have exposed his bones, those bones will be the last relic in the world to bear record that he once trod this green earth, and that life was once dear to him, Thomas, or James, or Paul. Or whether that thrilling, loving, thinking something, that he calls himself, has indeed within it an indestructible existence which shall still be conscious, when every thing else shall have rushed into endless wreck. Oh, in the awful earnestness of a question such as that, a speculation and a peradventure will not do: we must have proof. The honest doubt of Thomas craves a sign as much as the cold doubt of the Sadducee. And a sign shall be mercifully given to the doubt of love which is refused to the doubt of indifference.

This passage presents two lines of thought.

I. The naturalness of the doubts of Thomas, which partly excuses them.

II. The evidences of the Christian Resurrection.

I. The naturalness of the doubts of Thomas.

The first assertion that we make to explain those doubts is, that Nature is silent respecting a future life. All that reason, all that nature, all that religion, apart from Christ, have to show us is something worse than darkness. It is the twilight of excruciating uncertainty. There is enough in the riddle of this world to show us that there *may* be a life to come; there is nothing to make it certain that there *will* be one. We crave, as Thomas did, a sign either in the height above or in the depth beneath, and the answer seems to fall back like ice upon our hearts—"there shall no sign be given you."

It is the uncertainty of twilight. You strain at something in the twilight, and just when you are beginning to make out its form and color, the light fails you, and your eyelids sink down, wet and wearied with the exertion. Just so it is when we strain into nature's mysteries, to discern the secrets of the great hereafter. Exactly at the moment when we think we begin to distinguish something, the light goes out and we are left groping in darkness—the darkness of the grave.

Let us forget for a moment that we ever heard of Christ: what is there in life or nature to strengthen the guess that there is a life to come? There are hints—there are probabilities—there is nothing more. Let us examine some of those probabilities.

First, there is an irrepressible longing in our hearts. We *wish* for immortality. The thought of annihilation is horrible: even to conceive it is almost impossible. The wish is a kind of argument: it is not likely that God would have given all men such a feeling, if He had not meant to gratify it. Every natural longing has its natural satisfaction. If we thirst, God has created liquids to gratify thirst. If we are susceptible of attachments, there are beings to gratify that love. If we thirst for life and love eternal, it is likely that there are an eternal life and an eternal love to satisfy that craving.

Likely, I say: more we can not say. A likelihood of an immortality of which our passionate yearnings are a presumption—nothing higher than a likelihood. And in weary moments, when the desire of life is not strong, and in unloving moments, there is not even a likelihood.

Secondly, corroborating this feeling we have the traditions of universal belief. There is not a nation perhaps which does not in some form or other hold that there is a country beyond the grave where the weary are at rest. Now that which all men everywhere and in every age have held, it is impossible to treat contemptuously. How came it to be held by all, if only a delusion? Here is another probability in the universality of belief. And yet when you come to estimate this, it is too slender for a proof: it is only a presumption. The universal voice of mankind is not infallible. It was the universal belief once on the evidence of the senses that the earth was stationary: the universal voice was wrong. The universal voice might be wrong in the matter of a resurrection. It might be only a beautiful and fond dream, indulged till hope made itself seem to be a reality. You can not build upon it.

Once again: in this strange world of perpetual change, we are met by many resemblances to a resurrection. Without much exaggeration we call them resurrections. There is the resurrection of the moth from the grave of the chrysalis. For many ages the sculptured butterfly was the type and emblem of immortality. Because it passes into a state of torpor or deadness, and because from that it emerges by a kind of resurrection—the same, yet not the same—in all the radiance of a fresh and beautiful youth, never again to be supported by the coarse substance of earth, but destined henceforth to nourish its etherealized existence on the nectar of the flowers—the ancients saw in that transformation a something added to their hopes of immortality. It was their beautiful symbol of the soul's indestructibility.

Again, there is a kind of resurrection when the spring brings vigor and motion back to the frozen pulse of the winter world. Let any one go into the fields at this spring season of the year. Let him mark the busy preparations for life which are going on. Life is at work in every emerald bud, in the bursting bark of every polished bough, in the greening tints of every brown hillside. A month ago every thing was as still and cold as the dead silence which chills the heart in the highest regions of the glacier solitudes. Life is coming back to a dead world. It is a resurrection surely! The return of freshness to the frozen world is not less marvellous than the return of sensibility to a heart which has ceased to beat. If one has taken place, the other is not impossible.

And yet all this, valuable as it is in the way of suggestiveness, is worth nothing in the way of proof. It is worth every thing to the heart, for it strengthens the dim guesses and vague intimations which the heart has formed already. It is worth nothing to the intellect: for the moment we come to argue the matter we find how little there is to rest upon in these analogies. They are no real resurrections, after all: they only look like resurrections. The chrysalis only *seemed* dead: the tree in winter only seemed to have lost its vitality. Show us a butterfly which has been dried and crushed, fluttering its brilliant wings next year again—show us a tree plucked up by the roots and seasoned by exposure, the vital force really killed out, putting forth its leaves again, then we should have a real parallel to a resurrection. But nature does not show us that. So that all we have got in the butterfly and the spring are illustrations exquisitely in point *after* immortality is proved, but in themselves no proofs at all.

Further still. Look at it in another point of view, and it is a dark prospect. Human history behind and human history before, both give a stern "No," in reply to the question —Shall we rise again?

Six thousand years of human existence have passed away; countless armies of the dead have set sail from the shores of time. No traveller has returned from the still land beyond. More than one hundred and fifty generations have done their work, and sunk into the dust again, and still there is not a voice; there is not a whisper from the grave to tell us whether indeed those myriads are in existence still. Besides, why should they be? Talk as you will of the grandeur of man, why should it not be honor enough for him, more than enough to satisfy a thing so mean, to have had his twenty or his seventy years' life-rent of God's universe?

Why must such a thing, apart from proof, rise up and claim to himself an exclusive immortality?

Man's majesty! man's worth! the difference between him and the elephant or ape is too degradingly small to venture much on. That is not all: instead of looking backward, now look forward. The wisest thinkers tell us that there are already on the globe traces of a demonstration that the human race is drawing to its close. Each of the great human families has had its day—its infancy—its manhood—its decline. The two last races that have not been tried are on the stage of earth doing their work now. There is no other to succeed them. Man is but of yesterday, and yet his race is well-nigh done. Man is wearing out, as every thing before him has been worn out. In a few more centuries the crust of earth will be the sepulchre of the race of man, as it has been the sepulchre of extinct races of palm-trees, and ferns, and gigantic reptiles. The time is near when the bones of the last human being will be given to the dust. It is historically certain that man has quite lately, within a few thousand years, been called into existence. It is certain that before very long the race must be extinct.

Now look at all this without Christ, and tell us whether it be possible to escape such misgivings, and such reasonings as these which rise out of such an aspect of things. Man, this thing of yesterday, which sprung out of the eternal nothingness, why may he not sink, after he has played his appointed part, into nothingness again? You see the leaves sinking one by one in autumn, till the heaps below are rich with the spoils of a whole year's vegetation. They were bright and perfect while they lasted: each leaf a miracle of beauty and contrivance. There is no resurrection for the leaves—why must there be one for man?

Go and stand some summer evening by the river side: you will see the mayfly sporting out its little hour, in dense masses of insect life, darkening the air a few feet above the gentle swell of the water. The heat of that very afternoon brought them into existence. Every gauze wing is traversed by ten thousand fibres which defy the microscope to find a flaw in their perfection. The omniscience and the care bestowed upon that exquisite anatomy, one would think, can not be destined to be wasted in a moment. Yet so it is: when the sun has sunk below the trees its little life is done. Yesterday it was not: to-morrow it will not be. God has bidden it be happy for one evening. It has no right or claim to a second, and in the universe that marvellous life has appeared once and will appear no more. May not the race of man sink like the generations of the mayfly? Why can not the Creator, so lavish in His resources, afford to annihilate souls as he annihilates insects?

Would it not almost enhance His glory to believe it?

That, brethren, is the question; and Nature has no reply. The fearful secret of sixty centuries has not yet found a voice. The whole evidence lies before us. We know what the greatest and wisest have had to say in favor of an immortality; and we know how, after eagerly devouring all their arguments, our hearts have sunk back in cold disappointment, and to every proof as we read, our lips have replied mournfully, *that* will not stand. Search through tradition, history, the world within you and the world without—except in Christ there is not the shadow of a shade of proof that man survives the grave.

I do not wonder that Thomas, with that honest accurate mind of his, wishing that the news were true, yet dreading lest it should be false, and determined to guard against every possible illusion, delusion, and deception, said so strongly, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

II. The Christian proofs of a Resurrection.

This text tells us of two kinds of proof: The first is the evidence of the senses—"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed." The other is the evidence of the Spirit—"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Let us scrutinize the external evidence of Christ's resurrection which those verses furnish. It is a twofold evidence: The witness of the Apostle Thomas, who was satisfied with the proofs—the witness of St. John, who records the circumstance of his satisfaction. Consider first the witness of St. John: try it by ordinary rules. Hearsay evidence, which comes second-hand, is suspicious, but St. John's is no distant hearsay story. He does not say that he had heard the story from Thomas, and that years afterwards, when the circumstances had lost their exact sharp outline, he had penned it down, when he was growing old and his memory might be failing. St. John was present the whole time. All the apostles were there: they all watched the result with eager interest. The conditions made by Thomas, without which he would not believe, had been made before them all. They all heard him say that the demonstration was complete: they all saw him touch the wounds: and St. John recorded what he saw. Now a scene like that is one of those solemn ones in a man's life which can not be forgotten: it graves itself on the memory. A story told us by another may be unintentionally altered or exaggerated in the repetition; but a spectacle like this, so strange and so solemn, could not be forgotten or misinterpreted. St. John could have made no mistake. Estimate next the worth of the witness of Thomas: try it by the ordinary rules of life. Evidence is worth little if it is the evidence of credulity. If you find a man believing every new story, and accepting every fresh discovery, so called, without scrutiny, you may give him credit for sincerity; you can not rest much upon his judgment: his testimony can not go for much. For example, when St. Peter, after his escape from prison, knocked at Mark's mother's door, there went a maid to open it, who came back scared and startled with the tidings that she had seen his angel or spirit. Had she gone about afterwards among the believers with that tale, that St. Peter was dead and alive again, it would have been worth little. Her fears, her sex, her credulity, all robbed her testimony of its worth.

Now the resurrection of Christ does not stand on such a footing. There was one man who dreaded the possibility of delusion, however credulous the others might be. He resolved beforehand that only one proof should be decisive. He would not be contented with seeing Christ: that might be a dream: it might be the vision of a disordered fancy. He would not be satisfied with the assurance of others. The evidence of testimony which he did reject was very strong. Ten of his most familiar friends, and certain women, gave in their separate and their united testimony; but against all that St. Thomas held out skeptically firm. They might have been deceived themselves: they might have been trifling with him. The possibilities of mistake were innumerable: the delusions of the best men about what they see are incredible. He would trust a thing so infinitely important to nothing but his own scrutinizing hand. It might be some one personating his Master. He would put his hands into real wounds, or else hold it unproved. The allegiance which was given in so enthusiastically, "My Lord, and my God," was given in after, and not before scrutiny. It was the cautious verdict of an enlightened, suspicious, most earnest, and most honest skeptic.

Try the evidence next by character. Blemished character damages evidence. Now the only charge that was ever heard against the Apostle John was that he loved a world which hated him. The character of the Apostle Thomas is that he was a man cautious in receiving evidence, and most rigorous in exacting satisfactory proof, but ready to act upon his convictions when once made, even to the death. Love, elevated above the common love of man, in the one—heroic conscientiousness and a most rare integrity in the other—who impeaches that testimony?

Once more: any possibility of interested motives will discredit evidence. Ask we the motive of John or Thomas for this strange tale? John's reward—a long and solitary banishment to the mines of Patmos. The gain and the bribe which tempted Thomas—a lonely pilgrimage to the far East, and death at the last in India. Those were strange motives to account for their persisting and glorying in the story of the resurrection to the last! Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

The evidence to which Thomas yielded was the evidence of the senses—touch, and sight, and hearing. Now the feeling which arose from this touching, and feeling, and demonstration, Christ pronounced to be faith: "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed." There are some Christian writers who tell us that the conviction produced by the intellect or the senses is not faith: but Christ says it is. Observe, then, it matters not *how* faith comes — whether through the intellect, as in the case of St. Thomas — or through the heart, as in the case of St. John—or as the result of long education, as in the case of St. Peter. God has many ways of bringing different characters to faith: but that blessed thing which the Bible calls faith is a *state* of soul in which the things of God become glorious certainties. It was not faith which assured Thomas that what stood before him was the Christ he had known: that was sight. But it was faith, which from the visible enabled him to pierce up to the truth invisible: "My Lord, and my God." And it was faith which enabled him through all life after, to venture every thing on that conviction, and live for One who had died for him.

Remark again this: The faith of Thomas was not merely satisfaction about a fact: it was trust in a person. The admission of a fact, however sublime, is not faith: we may believe that Christ is risen, yet not be nearer heaven. It is a Bible fact that Lazarus rose from the grave, but belief in Lazarus's resurrection does not make the soul better than it was. Thomas passed on from the fact of the resurrection to the person of the risen: "My Lord, and my God." Trust in the risen Saviour—that was the belief which saved his soul.

And that is our salvation too. You may satisfy yourself about the evidences of the resurrection; you may bring in your verdict well, like a cautious and enlightened judge; you are then in possession of a fact, a most valuable and curious fact: but faith of any saving worth you have not, unless from the fact you pass on, like Thomas, to cast the allegiance and the homage of your soul, and the love of all your being, on Him whom Thomas worshipped. It is not belief *about* the Christ, but personal trust *in* the Christ of God, that saves the soul.

There is another kind of evidence by which the resurrection becomes certain. Not the evidence of the senses, but the evidence of the spirit: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." There are thousands of Christians who have never examined the evidences of the resurrection piece by piece: they are incapable of estimating it if they did examine: they know nothing about the laws of evidence: they have had no experience in balancing the value of testimony: they are neither lawyers nor philosophers: and yet these simple Christians have received into their very souls the resurrection of their Redeemer, and look forward to their own rising from the grave with a trust as firm, as steady, and as saving, as if they had themselves put their hands into His wounds. They have never seen—they know nothing of proofs and miracles — yet they believe, and are blessed. How is this?

I reply, there is an inward state of heart which makes truth credible the moment it is stated. It is credible to some men because of what they are. Love is credible to a loving heart: purity is credible to a pure mind: life is credible to a spirit in which ever life beats strongly: it is incredible to other men. Because of that such men believe. Of course that inward state could not *reveal* a fact like the resurrection; but it can *receive* the fact the moment it is revealed without requiring evidence. The love of St. John himself never could discover a resurrection; but it made a resurrection easily believed, when the man of intellect, St. Thomas, found difficulties. Therefore "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and therefore "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," and therefore "faith is the substance of things hoped for." Now it is of such a state, a state of love and hope, which makes the Divine truth credible and natural at once, that Jesus speaks: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

There are men in whom the resurrection begun makes the resurrection credible. In them the Spirit of the risen Saviour works already; and they have mounted with Him from the grave. They have risen out of the darkness of doubt, and are expatiating in the brightness and the sunshine of a day in which God is ever light. Their step is as free as if the clay of the sepulchre had been shaken off: and their hearts are lighter than those of other men; and there is in them an unearthly triumph which they are unable to express. They have risen above the narrowness of life, and all that is petty, and ungenerous, and mean. They have risen above fear—they have risen above self. In the New Testament that is called the spiritual resurrection, a being, "risen with Christ:" and the man in whom all that is working has got something more blessed than external evidence to rest upon. He has the witness in himself: he has not seen, and yet he has believed: he believed in a resurrection, because he has the resurrection in himself. The resurrection in all its heavenliness and unearthly elevation has begun within his soul, and he knows as clearly as if he had demonstration, that it must be developed in an eternal life.

Now this is the higher and nobler kind of faith—a faith more blessed than that of Thomas. "Because thou hast seen me, *thou* hast believed." There are times when we envy, as possessed of higher privileges, those who saw Christ in the flesh: we think that if we could have heard that calm voice, or seen that blessed presence, or touched those lacerated wounds in His sacred flesh, all doubt would be set at rest forever. Therefore these words must be our corrective. God has granted us the possibility of believing in a more trustful and more generous way than if we *saw*. To believe, not because we are learned and can prove, but because there is a something in us, even God's own Spirit, which makes us feel Light as light, and Truth as true—that is the blessed faith.

Blessed, because it carries with it spiritual elevation of character. Narrow the prospects of man to this time-world, and it is impossible to escape the conclusions of the Epicurean sensualist. If to-morrow we die, let us eat and drink to-day. If we die the sinner's death, it becomes a matter of mere taste whether we shall live the sinner's life or not. But if our existence is forever, then plainly, that which is to be daily subdued and subordinated is the animal within us: that which is to be cherished is that which is likest God within us—which we have from Him, and which is the sole pledge of eternal being in the spirit-life.

XXI.

THE IRREPARABLE PAST.

"And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."—Mark xiv. 41, 42.

It is upon two sentences of this passage that our attention it to be fixed to-day—sentences which in themselves are apparently contradictory, but which are pregnant with a lesson of the deepest practical import. Looked at in the mere meaning of the words as they stand, our Lord's first command given to His disciples, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," is inconsistent with the second command, which follows almost in the same breath, "Rise, let us be going." A permission to slumber, and a warning to arouse at once, are injunctions which can scarcely stand together in the same sentence consistently.

Our first inquiry therefore is, what did our Redeemer mean? We shall arrive at the true solution of this difficulty if we review the circumstances under which these words were spoken.

The account with which these verses stand connected, belongs to one of the last scenes in the drama of our Master's earthly pilgrimage: it is found in the history of the trial-hour which was passed in the garden of Gethsemane. And an hour it was indeed big with the destinies of the world, for the command had gone forth to seize the Saviour's person: but the Saviour was still at large and free. Upon the success or the frustration of that plan the world's fate was trembling. Three men were selected to be witnesses of the sufferings of that hour: three men, the favored ones on all occasions of the apostolic band, and the single injunction which had been laid upon them was, "Watch with me one hour."

That charge to watch or keep awake, seems to have been given with two ends in view. He asked them to keep awake, first that they might sympathize with him. He commanded them to keep awake that they might be on their guard against surprise: that they might afford sympathy, because never in all His career did Christ more stand in need of such soothing as it was in the power of man to give. It is true that was not much: the struggle, and the agony, and the making up of the mind to death had something in them too Divine and too mysterious to be understood by the disciples, and therefore sympathy could but reach a portion of what our Redeemer felt. Yet still it appears to have been an additional pang in Christ's anguish to find that He was left thoroughly alone—to endure, while even His own friends did not compassionate His endurance. We know what a relief it is to see the honest affectionate face of a menial servant, or some poor dependent, regretting that your suffering may be infinitely above his comprehension. It may be a secret which you can not impart to him: or it may be a mental distress which his mind is too uneducated to appreciate: yet still his sympathy in your dark hour is worth a world. What you suffer he knows not, but he knows you do suffer, and it pains him to think of it: there is balm to you in that. This is the power of sympathy.

We can do little for one another in this world. Little, very little, can be done when the worst must come; but yet to know that the pulses of a human heart are vibrating with yours, there is something in that, let the distance between man and man be ever so immeasurable, exquisitely soothing.

It was this, and but this, in the way of feeling, that Christ asked of Peter, James, and John: Watch—be awake: let me not feel that when I agonize you can be at ease and comfortable. But it would seem there was another thing which He asked in the way of assistance. The plot to capture Him was laid; the chance of that plot's success lay in making the surprise so sudden as to cut off all possibility of escape. The hope of defeating that plot depended upon the fidelity of apostolic vigilance. Humanly speaking, had they been vigilant they might have saved Him. Breathless listening for the sound of footsteps in the distance: eyes anxiously straining through the trees to distinguish the glitter of the lanterns; unremitting apprehension catching from the word of Christ an intimation that He was in danger, and so giving notice on the first approach of any thing like intrusion—that would have been watching.

That command to watch was given twice—first, when Christ first retired aside leaving the disciples by themselves; secondly, in a reproachful way when He returned and found His request disregarded. He waked them up once and said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" He came again, and found their eyes closed once more. On that occasion not a syllable fell from His lips; He did not waken them a second time. He passed away sad and disappointed, and left them to their slumbers. But when He came the third time, it was no longer possible for their sleep to do Him harm or their watching to do Him good. The precious opportunity was lost forever. Sympathy, vigilance, the hour for these was past. The priests had succeeded in their surprise, and Judas had well led them through the dark, with unerring accuracy, to the very spot where his Master knelt; and there were seen quite close, the dark figures shown in relief against the glare of the red torchlight, and every now and then the gleam glittering from the bared steel and the Roman armor. It was all over, they might sleep as they liked, their sleeping could do no injury now; their watching could do no good. And, therefore, partly in bitterness, partly in reproach, partly in a kind of irony, partly in sad earnest, our Master said to His disciples: "Sleep on now: there is no use in watching now: take your rest—forever if you will. Sleep and rest can do me no more harm now, for all that watching might have done is lost."

But, brethren, we have to observe that in the next sentence our Redeemer addresses Himself to the consideration of what could yet be done: the best thing as circumstances then stood. So far as any good to be got from watching went, they might sleep on: there was no reparation for the fault that had been done: but so far as duty went, there was still much of endurance to which they had to rouse themselves. They could not save their Master, but they might loyally and manfully share His disgrace, and, if it must be, His death. They could not put off the penalty, but they might steel themselves cheerfully to share it. Safety was out of the question: but they might meet their fate, instead of being overwhelmed by it: and so, as respected what was gone by, Christ said, "Sleep, what is done can not be undone;" but as respected the duties that were lying before them still, He said, "We must make the best of it that can be made: rouse yourselves to dare the worst: on to enact your parts like men. Rise, let us be going—we have something still left to do." Here then we have two subjects of contemplation distinctly marked out for us.

I. The irreparable past.
II. The available future.

The words of Christ are not like the words of other men: His sentences do not end with the occasion which called them forth: every sentence of Christ's is a deep principle of human life, and it is so with these sentences: "Sleep on now"

—that is a principle. "Rise up, and let us be going"—that is another principle. The principle contained in "Sleep on now" is this, that the past is irreparable, and after a certain moment waking will do no good. You may improve the future, the past is gone beyond recovery. As to all that is gone by, so far as the hope of altering it goes, you may sleep on and take your rest: there is no power in earth or heaven that can undo what has once been done.

Now let us proceed to give illustrations of this principle.

It is true, first of all, with respect to *time* that is gone by. Time is the solemn inheritance to which every man is born heir, who has a life-rent of this world—a little section cut out of eternity and given us to do our work in: an eternity before, an eternity behind; and the small stream between, floating swiftly from one into the vast bosom of the other. The man who has felt with all his soul the significance of Time will not be long in learning any lesson that this world has to teach him. Have you ever felt it, my Christian brethren? Have you ever realized how your own little streamlet is gliding away, and bearing you along with it towards that awful other world of which all things here are but the thin shadows, down into that eternity towards which the confused wreck of all earthly things are bound? Let us realize that, beloved brethren: until that sensation of Time, and the infinite meaning which is wrapped up in it, has taken possession of our souls, there is no chance of our ever feeling other than that it is worse than madness to sleep that time away. Every day in this world has its work; and every day as it rises out of eternity keeps putting to each of us the question afresh, What will you do before to-day has sunk into eternity and nothingness again? And now what have we to say with respect to this strange solemn thing—Time? That men do with it through life just what the apostles did for one precious and irreparable hour in the garden of Gethsemane: they go to sleep. Have you ever seen those marble statues in some public square or garden, which art has so fashioned into a perennial fountain that through the lips or through the hands the clear water flows in a perpetual stream, on and on forever; and the marble stands there—passive, cold—making no effort to arrest the gliding water?

It is so that Time flows through the hands of men—swift, never pausing till it has run itself out; and there is the man petrified into a marble sleep, not feeling what it is which is passing away forever. It is so, brethren, just so, that the destiny of nine men out of ten accomplishes itself, slipping away from them, aimless, useless, till it is too late. And this passage asks us with all the solemn thoughts which crowd around an approaching eternity—what has been our life, and what do we intend it shall be? Yesterday, last week, last year—they are gone. Yesterday, for example, was such a day as never was before, and never can be again. Out of darkness and eternity it was born a new fresh day: into darkness and eternity it sank again forever. It had a voice calling to us, of its own. Its own work—its own duties. What were we doing yesterday? Idling, whiling away the time in light and luxurious literature—not as life's relaxation, but as life's business? thrilling our hearts with the excitements of life—contriving how to spend the day most pleasantly? Was that our day? Sleep, brethren! all that is but the sleep of the three apostles. And now let us remember this: there is a day coming when that sleep will be broken rudely, with a shock: there is a day in our future lives when our time will be counted not by years nor by months, nor yet by hours, but by minutes—the day when unmistakable symptoms shall announce that the messengers of death have come to take us.

That startling moment will come which it is in vain to attempt to realize now, when it will be felt that it is all over at last—that our chance and our trial are past. The moment that we have tried to think of, shrunk from, put away from us, here it is—going too, like all other moments that have gone before it: and then with eyes unsealed at last, you look back on the life which is gone by. There is no mistake about it: there it is, a sleep, a most palpable sleep—self-indulged unconsciousness of high destinies, and God and Christ: a sleep when Christ was calling out to you to watch with Him one hour—a sleep when there was something to be done—a sleep broken, it may be, once or twice by restless dreams, and by a voice of truth which *would* make itself heard at times, but still a sleep which was only rocked into deeper stillness by interruption. And now from the undone eternity the bosom of whose waves is distinctly audible upon your soul, there comes the same voice again—a solemn sad voice—but no longer the same word, "Watch"—other words altogether, "You may go to sleep." It is too late to wake; there is no science in earth or heaven to recall time that once has fled.

Again, this principle of the irreparable past holds good with respect to preparing for temptation. That hour in the garden was a precious opportunity given for laying in spiritual strength. Christ knew it well. He struggled and fought *then:* therefore there was no struggling afterwards—

no trembling in the judgment-hall—no shrinking on the cross, but only dignified and calm victory; for He had fought the temptation on His knees beforehand, and conquered all in the garden. The battle of the judgment-hall, the battle of the cross, were already fought and over, in the watch and in the agony. The apostles missed the meaning of that hour; and therefore when it came to the question of trial, the loudest boaster of them all shrunk from acknowledging whose he was, and the rest played the part of the craven and the renegade. And if the reason of this be asked, it is simply this: They went to trial unprepared: they had not prayed: and what is a Christian without prayer but Samson without his talisman of hair?

Brethren, in this world, when there is any foreseen or suspected danger before us, it is our duty to forecast our trial. It is our wisdom to put on our armor—to consider what lies before us—to call up resolution in God's strength to go through what we may have to do. And it is marvellous how difficulties smooth away before a Christian when he does this. Trials that cost him a struggle to meet even in imagination—like the heavy sweat of Gethsemane, when Christ was looking forward and feeling exceeding sorrowful even unto death—come to their crisis; and behold, to his astonishment they are nothing—they have been fought and conquered already. But if you go to meet those temptations, not as Christ did, but as the apostles did, prayerless, trusting to the chance impulse of the moment, you may make up your mind to fail. That opportunity lost is irreparable: it is your doom to yield then. Those words are true, you may "sleep on now, and take your rest," for you have betrayed yourselves into the hands of danger.

And now one word about prayer. It is a preparation for danger, it is the armor for battle. Go not, my Christian brother, into the dangerous world without it. You kneel down at night to pray, and drowsiness weighs down your eyelids. A hard day's work is a kind of excuse, and you shorten your prayer and resign yourself softly to repose. The morning breaks, and it may be you rise late, and so your early devotions are not done, or done with irregular haste. No watching unto prayer—wakefulness once more omitted. And now we ask, is that reparable? Brethren, we solemnly believe not. There has been that done which can not be undone. You have given up your prayer, and you will suffer for it. Temptation is before you, and you are not fit to meet it. There is a guilty feeling on the soul, and you linger at a distance from Christ. It is no marvel if that day, in which you suffer drowsiness to interfere with prayer, be a day on which you betray Him by cowardice and soft shrinking from duty. Let it be a principle through life, moments of prayer intruded upon by sloth can not be made up. We may get experience, but we can not get back the rich freshness and the strength which were wrapped up in these moments.

Once again this principle is true in another respect. Opportunities of doing good do not come back. We are here, brethren, for a most definite and intelligible purpose—to educate our own hearts by deeds of love, and to be the instrument of blessing to our brother men. There are two ways in which this is to be done—by guarding them from danger, and by soothing them in their rough path by kindly sympathies—the two things which the apostles were asked to do for Christ. And it is an encouraging thought, that he who can not do the one has at least the other in his power. If he can not protect he can sympathize. Let the weakest—let the humblest in this congregation remember, that in his daily course he can, if he will, shed around him almost a heaven. Kindly words, sympathizing attentions, watchfulness against wounding men's sensitiveness—these cost very little, but they are priceless in their value. Are they not, brethren, almost the staple of our daily happiness? From hour to hour, from moment to moment, we are supported, blest, by small kindnesses. And then consider: Here is a section of life, one-third, one-half, it may be three-fourths gone by, and the question before us is, how much has been done in that way? Who has charged himself with the guardianship of his brother's safety? Who has laid on himself as a sacred duty to sit beside his brother suffering? Oh! my brethren, it is the omission of these things which is irreparable: irreparable, when you look to the purest enjoyment which might have been your own: irreparable, when you consider the compunction which belongs to deeds of love not done; irreparable, when you look to this groaning world and feel that its agony of bloody sweat has been distilling all night, and you were dreaming away in luxury! Shame, shame upon our selfishness! There is an infinite voice in the sin and sufferings of earth's millions, which makes every idle moment, every moment, that is, which is not relaxation, guilt; and seems to cry out, If you will not bestir yourself for love's sake now, it will soon be too late.

Lastly, this principle applies to a misspent youth. There is something very remarkable in the picture which is placed before us. There is a picture of *One* struggling, toiling, standing between others and danger, and those others quietly content to reap the benefit of that struggle without anxiety of their own. And there is something in this singularly like the position in which all young persons are placed. The young are by God's providence exempted in a great measure from anxiety: they are as the apostles were in relation to their Master: their friends stand between them and the struggles of existence. They are not called upon to think for themselves: the burden is borne by others. They get their bread without knowing or caring how it is paid for: they smile and laugh without a suspicion of the anxious thoughts of day and night which a parent bears to enable them to smile. So to speak they are sleeping—and it is not a guilty sleep—while another watches.

My young brethren—youth is one of the precious opportunities of life—rich in blessing if you choose to make it so, but having in it the materials of undying remorse if you suffer it to pass unimproved. Your quiet Gethsemane is now. Gethsemane's struggles you can not know yet. Take care that you do not learn too well Gethsemane's sleep. Do you know how you can imitate the apostles in their fatal sleep? You can suffer your young days to pass idly and uselessly away; you can live as if you had nothing to do but to enjoy yourselves: you can let others think for you, and not try to become thoughtful yourselves: till the business and the difficulties of life come upon you unprepared, and you find yourselves like men waking from sleep, hurried, confused, scarcely able to stand, with all the faculties bewildered, not knowing right from wrong, led headlong to evil, just because you have not given yourselves in time to learn what is good. All that is sleep.

And now let us mark it. You can not repair that in after-life. Oh! remember every period of human life has its own lesson, and you can not learn that lesson in the next period. The boy has one set of lessons to learn, and the young man another, and the grown-up man another. Let us consider one single instance. The boy has to learn docility, gentleness of temper, reverence, submission. All those feelings which are to be transferred afterwards in full cultivation to God, like plants nursed in a hotbed and then planted out, are to be cultivated first in youth. Afterwards, those habits which have been merely habits of obedience to an earthly parent, are to become religious submission to a heavenly parent. Our parents stand to us in the place of God. Veneration for our parents is intended to become afterwards adoration for something higher. Take that single instance; and now suppose that *that* is not learnt in boyhood. Suppose that the boy sleeps to that duty of veneration, and learns only flippancy, insubordination, and the habit of deceiving his father—can that, my young brethren, be repaired afterwards? Humanly speaking, not. Life is like the transition from class to class in a school. The school-boy who has not learnt arithmetic in the earlier classes can not secure it when he comes to mechanics in the higher: each section has its own sufficient work. He may be a good philosopher or a good historian, but a bad arithmetician he remains for life; for he can not lay the foundation at the moment when he must be building the superstructure. The regiment which has not perfected itself in its manœuvres on the parade-ground can not learn them before the guns of the enemy. And just in the same way, the young person who has slept his youth away, and become idle, and selfish, and hard, can not make up for that afterwards. He may do something, he may be religious—yes; but he can not be what he might have been. There is a part of his heart which will remain uncultivated to the end. The apostles could share their Master's sufferings—they could not save Him. Youth has its irreparable past.

And therefore, my young brethren, let it be impressed upon you—NOW is a time, infinite in its value for eternity, which will never return again. Sleep not; learn that there is a very solemn work of heart which must be done while the stillness of the garden of your Gethsemane gives you time. Now—or never. The treasures at your command are infinite. Treasures of time, treasures of youth, treasures of opportunity that grown-up men would sacrifice every thing they have to possess. Oh for ten years of youth back again with the added experience of age! But it can not be: they must be content to sleep on now, and take their rest.

We are to pass on next to a few remarks on the other sentence in this passage, which brings before us for consideration the future which is still available: for we are to observe, that our Master did not limit His apostles to a regretful recollection of their failure. Recollection of it He did demand. There were the materials of a most cutting self-reproach in the few words He said: for they contained all the desolation of that sad word, *never.* Who knows not what that word wraps up—never—it *never* can be undone. Sleep on. But yet there was no sickly lingering over the irreparable. Our Master's words are the words of One who had fully recognized the hopelessness of His position, but yet manfully and calmly had numbered His resources and scanned His duties, and then braced up His mind to meet the exigencies of His situation with no passive endurance: the moment was come for action—"Rise, let us be going."

Now the broad general lesson which we gain from this is not hard to read. It is that a Christian is to be forever rousing himself to recognize the duties which lie before him *now*. In Christ the motto is ever this, "Let us be going." Let me speak to the conscience of some one. Perhaps yours is a very remorseful past—a foolish, frivolous, disgraceful, frittered past. Well, Christ says, My servant, be sad, but no languor; there is work to be done for me yet—rise up, be going! Oh my brethren, Christ takes your wretched remnants of life—the feeble pulses of a heart which has spent its best hours not for Him, but for self and for enjoyment, and in His strange love He condescends to accept them.

Let me speak to another kind of experience. Perhaps we feel that we have faculties which never have and now never will find their right field; perhaps we are ignorant of many things which can not be learnt now; perhaps the seed-time of life has gone by, and certain powers of heart and mind will not grow now; perhaps you feel that the best days of life are gone, and it is too late to begin things which were in your power once: still, my repentant brother, there is encouragement from your Master yet. Wake to the opportunities that yet remain. Ten years of life—five years—one year—say you have only that—will you sleep *that* away because you have already slept too long? Eternity is crying out to you louder and louder as you near its brink, Rise, be going: count your resources: learn what you are not fit for, and give up wishing for it: learn what you *can* do, and do it with the energy of a man. That is the great lesson of this passage. But now consider it a little more closely.

Christ impressed two things on His apostles' minds: 1. The duty of Christian earnestness—"Rise;" 2. The duty of Christian energy—"Let us be going."

Christ roused them to earnestness when He said, "Rise." A short, sharp, rousing call. They were to start up and wake to the realities of their position. The guards were on them: their Master was about to be led away to doom. That was an awakening which would make men spring to their feet in earnest. Brethren, goodness and earnestness are nearly the same thing. In the language in which this Bible was written there was one word which expressed them both: what we translate a good man, in Greek is literally "earnest." The Greeks felt that to be earnest was nearly identical with being good. But, however, there is a day in life when a man must be earnest, but it does not follow that he will be good. "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." That is a sound that will thunder through the most fast-locked slumber, and rouse men whom sermons can not rouse. But that will not make them holy. Earnestness of life, brethren, that is goodness. Wake in death you *must*, for it is an earnest thing to die. Shall it be this, I pray you?—Shall it be the voice of death which first says, "Arise," at the very moment when it says, "Sleep on forever?"—Shall it be the bridal train sweeping by, and the shutting of the doors, and the discovery that the lamp is gone out?—Shall *that* be the first time you know that it is an earnest thing to live? Let us feel that we have been *doing:* learn what time is—sliding from you, and not stopping when you stop: learn what sin is: learn what "*never*" is: "Awake, thou that sleepest."

Lastly, Christian energy—"Let us be going." There were two ways open to Christ in which to submit to His doom. He might have waited for it: instead of which He went to meet the soldiers. He took up the cross, the cup of anguish was not forced between His lips, He took it with His own hands, and drained it quickly to the last drop. In after years the disciples understood the lesson, and acted on it. They did not wait till persecution overtook them; they braved the Sanhedrim: they fronted the world: they proclaimed aloud the unpopular and unpalatable doctrines of the resurrection and the cross. Now in this there lies a principle. Under no conceivable set of circumstances are we justified in sitting

"By the poison'd springs of life,
Waiting for the morrow which shall free us from the strife."

Under no circumstances, whether of pain, or grief, or disappointment, or irreparable mistake, can it be true that there is not something to be *done*, as well as something to be suffered. And thus it is that the spirit of Christianity draws over our life, not a leaden cloud of remorse and despondency, but a sky—not perhaps of radiant, but yet of most serene and chastened and manly hope. There is a past which is gone for ever. But there is a future which is still our own.

SERMONS.

Third Series.

I.

THE TONGUE.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.—St. James iii. 5, 6.

In the development of Christian truth a peculiar office was assigned to the Apostle James.

It was given to St. Paul to proclaim Christianity as the spiritual law of liberty, and to exhibit faith as the most active principle within the breast of man. It was St. John's to say that the deepest quality in the bosom of Deity is love; and to assert that the life of God in man is love. It was the office of St. James to assert the necessity of moral rectitude; his very name marked him out peculiarly for this office: he was emphatically called, "the Just:" integrity was his peculiar characteristic. A man singularly honest, earnest, real. Accordingly, if you read through his whole epistle, you will find it is, from first to last, one continued vindication of the first principles of morality against the *semblances* of religion.

He protested against the censoriousness which was found connected with peculiar claims of religious feelings. "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." He protested against that spirit which had crept into the Christian brotherhood, truckling to the rich and despising the poor. "If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." He protested against that sentimental fatalism which induced men to throw the blame of their own passions upon God.

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God can not tempt to evil; neither tempteth He any man." He protested against that unreal religion of excitement which diluted the earnestness of real religion in the enjoyment of listening. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving your own souls." He protested against that trust in the correctness of theological doctrine which neglected the cultivation of character. "What doth it profit, if a man *say* that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"

Read St. James's epistle through, this is the mind breathing through it all: all this *talk* about religion, and spirituality—words, words, words—nay, let us have *realities.*

It is well known that Luther complained of this epistle, that it did not contain the Gospel; for men who are hampered by a system will say—even of an inspired apostle—that he does not teach the Gospel if their own favorite doctrine be not the central subject of his discourse; but St. James's reply seems spontaneously to suggest itself to us. The Gospel! how can we speak of the Gospel, when the first principles of *morality* are forgotten? when Christians are excusing themselves, and slandering one another? How can the superstructure of love and faith be built, when the very foundations of human character—justice, mercy, truth—have not been laid?

I. The license of the tongue.
II. The guilt of that license.

The first license given to the tongue is slander. I am not, of course, speaking now of that species of slander against which the law of libel provides a remedy, but of that of which the Gospel alone takes cognizance; for the worst injuries which man can do to man are precisely those which are too delicate for *law* to deal with. We consider therefore not the calumny which is reckoned such by the moralities of an earthly court, but that which is found guilty by the spiritualities of the courts of heaven—that is, the mind of God.

Now observe, this slander is compared in the text to poison—"the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known: there are poisons so destructive that a single drop insinuated into the veins produces death in three seconds, and yet no chemical science can separate that virus from the contaminated blood, and show the metallic particles of poison glittering palpably, and say, "Behold, it is there!"

In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope can not distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery.

In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, and arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence, may do the work: and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. Very emphatically was it said by one whose whole being had smarted under such affliction, "Adder's poison is under their lips."

The second license given to the tongue is in the way of persecution; "therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God." "We!"—men who bear the name of Christ—curse our brethren! Christians persecuted Christians. Thus even in St. James's age that spirit had begun, the monstrous fact of Christian persecution; from that day it has continued, through long centuries, up to the present time. The Church of Christ assumed the office of denunciation, and except in the first council, whose object was not to strain, but to relax the bonds of brotherhood, not a council has met for eighteen centuries which has not guarded each profession of belief by the too customary formula, "If any man maintain otherwise than this, let him be accursed."

Myriad, countless curses have echoed through those long ages; the Church has forgotten her Master's spirit and called down fire from heaven. A fearful thought to consider this as the spectacle on which the eye of God has rested. He looks down upon the creatures He has made, and hears everywhere the language of religious imprecations: and, after all, who is proved right by curses?

The Church of Rome hurls her thunders against Protestants of every denomination: the Calvinist scarcely recognizes the Arminian as a Christian: he who considers himself as the true Anglican, excludes from the Church of Christ all but the adherents of his own orthodoxy; every minister and congregation has its small circle beyond which all are heretics: nay, even among that sect which is most lax as to the dogmatic forms of truth, we find the Unitarian of the old school denouncing the spiritualism of the new and rising school.

This is the state of things to which we are arrived. Sisters of Charity refuse to permit an act of charity to be done by a Samaritan; ministers of the Gospel fling the thunderbolts of the Lord; ignorant hearers catch and exaggerate the spirit—boys, girls, and women shudder as one goes by, perhaps more holy than themselves, who adores the same God, believes in the same Redeemer, struggles in the same life-battle, and all this because they have been taught to look upon him as an enemy of God.

There is a class of religious persons against whom this vehemence has been especially directed. No one who can read the signs of the times can help perceiving that we are on the eve of great changes, perhaps a disruption of the Church of England. Unquestionably there has been a large secession to the Church of Rome.

Now what has been the position of those who are about to take this step? They have been taunted with dishonest reception of the wages of the Church; a watch has been set over them: not a word they uttered in private, or in public, but was given to the world by some religious busybody; there was not a visit which they paid, not a foolish dress which they adopted, but became the subject of bitter scrutiny and malevolent gossip. For years the religious press has denounced them with a vehemence as virulent, but happily more impotent than that of the Inquisition. There has been an anguish and an inward struggle little suspected, endured by men who felt themselves outcasts in their own society, and naturally looked for a home elsewhere.

We congratulate ourselves that the days of persecution are gone by; but persecution is that which affixes penalties upon *views held*, instead of upon *life led*. Is persecution *only* fire and sword? But suppose a man of sensitive feeling says, The sword is less sharp to me than the slander: fire is less intolerable than the refusal of sympathy!

Now let us bring this home; you rejoice that the faggot and the stake are given up; *you* never persecuted—you leave that to the wicked Church of Rome. Yes, you never burned a human being alive—you never clapped your hands as the death-shriek proclaimed that the lion's fang had gone home into the most vital part of the victim's frame; but did you never rob him of his friends?—gravely shake your head and oracularly insinuate that he was leading souls to hell?—chill the affections of his family?—take from him his good name? Did you never with delight see his Church placarded as the Man of Sin, and hear the platform denunciations which branded it with the spiritual abominations of the Apocalypse? Did you never find a malicious pleasure in repeating all the miserable gossip with which religious slander fastened upon his daily acts, his words, and even his uncommunicated thoughts? Did you never forget that for a man to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling" is a matter difficult enough to be laid upon a human spirit, without intruding into the most sacred department of another's life—that, namely, which lies between himself and God? Did you never say that "it was to be wished he should go to Rome," until at last life became intolerable—until he was thrown more and more in upon himself; found himself, like his Redeemer, in this world alone, but unable, like his Redeemer, calmly to repose upon the thought that his Father was with him? Then a stern defiant spirit took possession of his soul, and there burst from his lips, or heart, the wish for *rest*—rest at any cost, peace anywhere, if even it is to be found only in the bosom of the Church of Rome!

II. The guilt of this license.

1. The first evil consequence is the harm that a man does himself: "so is the tongue among the members, that it defiles the whole body." It is not very obvious, in what way a man does himself harm by calumny. I will take the simplest form in which this injury is done; it effects a dissipation of spiritual energy. There are two ways in which the steam of machinery may find an outlet for its force: it may work, and if so it works silently; or it may escape, and that takes place loudly, in air and noise. There are two ways in which the spiritual energy of a man's soul may find its vent: it may express itself in action, silently; or in words, noisily: but just so much of force as is thrown into the one mode of expression is taken from the other.

Few men suspect how much mere talk fritters away spiritual energy—that which should be spent in action spends itself in words. The fluent boaster is not the man who is steadiest before the enemy; it is well said to him that his courage is better kept till it is wanted. Loud utterance of virtuous indignation against evil from the platform, or in the drawing-room, do not characterize the spiritual giant: so much indignation as is expressed, has found vent, is wasted, is taken away from the work of coping with evil; the man has so much less left. And hence he who restrains that love of talk lays up a fund of spiritual strength.

With large significance, St. James declares, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." He is entire, powerful, because he has not spent his strength. In these days of loud profession, and bitter, fluent condemnation, it is well for us to learn the divine force of silence. Remember Christ in the judgment-hall, the very symbol and incarnation of spiritual strength; and yet when revilings were loud around Him and charges multiplied, "He held His peace."

2. The next feature in the guilt of calumny is its uncontrollable character: "the tongue can no man tame." You can not arrest a calumnious tongue, you can not arrest the calumny itself; you may refute a slanderer, you may trace home a slander to its source, you may expose the author of it, you may by that exposure give a lesson so severe as to make the repetition of the offense appear impossible; but the fatal habit is incorrigible; to-morrow the tongue is at work again.

Neither can you stop the consequences of a slander; you may publicly prove its falsehood, you may sift every atom, explain and annihilate it, and yet, years after you had thought that all had been disposed of forever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard the calumny, but never heard or never attended to the refutation, or who has only a vague and confused recollection of the whole, and he asks the question doubtfully, "But were there not some suspicious circumstances connected with him?"

It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burnt unquenched beneath the water, or like the weeds which, when you have extirpated them in one place are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot, at the distance of many hundred yards; or, to use the metaphor of St. James himself, it is like the wheel which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases; "it sets on fire the whole course of nature" (literally, the wheel of nature). You may tame the wild beast, the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry underwood is consumed; but you can not arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly yesterday or this morning—which you will utter, perhaps, before you have passed from this church one hundred yards: that will go on slaying, poisoning, burning beyond your own control, now and forever.

3. The third element of guilt lies in the unnaturalness of calumny. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be;" *ought not*—that is, they are unnatural. That this is St. James's meaning is evident from the second illustration which follows: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter?" "Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries, or a vine, figs."

There is apparently in these metaphors little that affords an argument against slander; the motive which they suggest would appear to many far-fetched and of small cogency; but to one who looks on this world as a vast whole, and who has recognized the moral law as only a part of the great law of the universe, harmoniously blending with the whole, illustrations such as these are the most powerful of all arguments. The truest definition of evil is that which represents it as something contrary to nature: evil is evil, because it is unnatural; a vine which should bear olive-berries, an eye to which blue seems yellow, would be diseased: an unnatural mother, an unnatural son, an unnatural act, are the strongest terms of condemnation. It is this view which Christianity gives of moral evil: the teaching of Christ was the recall of man to nature, not an infusion of something new into humanity. Christ came to call out all the principles and powers of human nature, to restore the natural equilibrium of all our faculties; not to call us back to our own individual selfish nature, but to human nature as it is in God's ideal—the perfect type which is to be realized in us. Christianity is the regeneration of our whole nature, not the destruction of one atom of it.

Now the nature of man is to adore God and to love what is Godlike in man. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty because it contradicts this; yet even in slander itself, perversion as it is, the interest of man in man is still distinguishable. What is it but perverted interest which makes the acts, and words, and thoughts of his brethren, even in their evil, a matter of such strange delight? Remember, therefore, this contradicts your nature and your destiny; to speak ill of others makes you a monster in God's world: get the habit of slander, and then there is not a stream which bubbles fresh from the heart of nature, there is not a tree that silently brings forth its genial fruit in its appointed season, which does not rebuke and proclaim you to be a monstrous anomaly in God's world.

4. The fourth point of guilt is the diabolical character of slander; the tongue "is set on fire of hell." Now, this is no mere strong expression—no mere indignant vituperation—it contains deep and emphatic meaning.

The apostle means literally what he says—slander is diabolical. The first illustration we give of this is contained in the very meaning of the word devil. "Devil," in the original, means traducer or slanderer. The first introduction of a demon spirit is found connected with a slanderous insinuation against the Almighty, implying that His command had been given in envy of His creature: "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

In the magnificent imagery of the book of Job, the accuser is introduced with a demoniacal and malignant sneer, attributing the excellence of a good man to interested motives; "Doth Job serve God for naught?" There is another mode in which the fearful accuracy of St. James's charge may be demonstrated. There is one state only from which there is said to be no recovery—there is but one sin that is called unpardonable. The Pharisees beheld the works of Jesus. They could not deny that they were good works, they could not deny that they were miracles of beneficence, but rather than acknowledge that they were done by a good man through the co-operation of a Divine spirit, they preferred to account for them by the wildest and most incredible hypothesis; they said they were done by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. It was upon this occasion that our Redeemer said with solemn meaning, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." It was then that He said, for a word spoken against the Holy Ghost there is no forgiveness in this world, or in the world to come.

Our own hearts respond to the truth of this—to call evil, good, and good, evil—to see the Divinest good, and call it satanic evil—below this lowest deep there is *not* a lower still. There is no cure for mortification of the flesh—there is no remedy for ossification of the heart. Oh, that miserable state, when to the jaundiced eye all good transforms itself into evil, and the very instruments of health become the poison of disease! Beware of every approach of this! beware of that spirit which controversy fosters, of watching only for the evil in the character of an antagonist! beware of that habit which becomes the slanderer's life, of magnifying every speck of evil and closing the eye to goodness! till at last men arrive at the state in which generous, universal love (which is heaven) becomes impossible, and a suspicious, universal hate takes possession of the heart, and *that* is hell!

There is one peculiar manifestation of this spirit to which I desire specially to direct your attention.

The politics of the community are guided by the political press. The religious views of a vast number are formed by that portion of the press which is called religious; it becomes, therefore, a matter of deepest interest to inquire what is the spirit of that "religious press." I am not asking you what are the views maintained—whether Evangelical, Anglican, or Romish—but what is the *spirit* of that fountain from which the religious life of so many is nourished?

Let any man cast his eye over the pages of this portion of the press—it matters little to which party the newspaper or the journal may belong—he will be startled to find the characters of those whom he has most deeply reverenced, whose hearts he knows, whose integrity and life are above suspicion, held up to scorn and hatred: the organ of one party is established against the organ of another, and it is the recognized office of each to point out with microscopic care the names of those whose views are to be shunned; and in order that these may be the more shrunk from, the characters of those who hold such opinions are traduced and vilified. There is no personality too mean—there is no insinuation too audacious or too false for the recklessness of these daring slanderers. I do not like to use the expression, lest it should appear to be merely one of theatrical vehemence; but I say it in all seriousness, adopting the inspired language of the Bible, and using it advisedly and with accurate meaning: the spirit which guides the "religious press" of this country —which dictates those personalities, which prevents controversialists from seeing what is good in their opponents, which attributes low motives to account for excellent lives, and teaches men whom to suspect and shun, rather than point out where it is possible to admire and love—is a spirit "set on fire of hell."

Before we conclude, let us get at the root of the matter. "Man," says the Apostle James, "was made in the image of God:" to slander man is to slander God: to love what is good in man is to love it in God. Love is the only remedy for slander: no set of rules or restrictions can stop it; we may denounce, but we shall denounce in vain. The radical cure of it is charity—"out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned," to feel what is great in the human character; to recognize with delight all high, and generous, and beautiful actions; to find a joy even in seeing the good qualities of your bitterest opponents, and to admire those qualities even in those with whom you have least sympathy—be it either the Romanist or the Unitarian—this is the only spirit which can heal the love of slander and calumny. If we would bless God, we must *first* learn to bless man, who is made in the image of God.

II.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—1 John v. 4, 5.

There are two words in the system of Christianity which have received a meaning so new, and so emphatic, as to be in a way peculiar to it, and to distinguish it from all other systems of morality and religion; these two words are—the world, and faith. We find it written in Scripture that to have the friendship of the world is to be the enemy of God; whereupon the question arises—the world?—did not God make the world? Did He not place us in the world? Are we not to love what God has made? And yet meeting this distinctly we have the inspired record, "Love not the world."

The object of the statesman is, or ought to be, to produce as much worldly prosperity as possible; but Christianity, that is Christ, speaks little of this world's prosperity, underrates it—nay, speaks of it at times as infinitely dangerous.

The legislator prohibits crime—the moralist transgression—the religionist sin. To these Christianity superadds a new enemy—the world and the things of the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The other word used in a peculiar sense is faith. It is impossible for any one to have read his Bible ever so negligently, and not to be aware that the word faith, or the grace of faith, forms a large element in the Christian system. It is said to work miracles, remove mountains, justify the soul, trample upon impossibilities. Every apostle, in his way, assigns to faith a primary importance. Jude tells us to "build up ourselves in our most holy faith." John tells us that—"he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" and Paul tells us that, not by merit nor by works, but by trust or reliance only, can be formed that state of soul by which man is reckoned just before God. In these expressions the apostles only develop their Master's meaning, when He uses such words as these, "All things are possible to him that believeth:" "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

These two words are brought into diametrical opposition in the text, so that it branches into a twofold line of thought.

I. The Christian's enemy, the world.
II. The victory of faith.

In endeavoring to understand first what is meant by the world, we shall feel that the mass of evil which is comprehended under this expression can not be told out in any one sermon; it is an expression used in various ways, sometimes meaning one thing, sometimes meaning another; but we will endeavor to explain its general principles—and these we will divide into three heads; first, the tyranny of the present; secondly, the tyranny of the sensual; and lastly, the spirit of society.

1. The tyranny of the present.

"Christ," says the Apostle Paul, "hath redeemed us from this present evil world;" and again, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Let a stress be laid on the word *present.* Worldliness is the attractive power of something present, in opposition to something to come. It is this rule and tyranny of the present that constitutes Demas a worldly man.

In this respect worldliness is the spirit of childhood carried on into manhood. The child lives in the present hour—today to him is every thing. The holiday promised at a distant interval is no holiday at all—it must be either now or never. Natural in the child, and therefore pardonable, this spirit, when carried on into manhood, is coarse—is worldliness. The most distinct illustration given us of this, is the case of Esau. Esau came from the hunting-field worn and hungry; the only means of procuring the tempting mess of his brother's pottage was the sacrifice of his father's blessing, which in those ages carried with it a substantial advantage; but that birthright could be enjoyed only after *years*—the pottage was *present*, near and certain; therefore he sacrificed a future and higher blessing for a present and lower pleasure. For this reason Esau is the Bible type of worldliness: he is called in

Scripture a profane, that is, not a distinctly vicious, but a secular or worldly person—an overgrown child; impetuous, inconsistent, not without gleams of generosity and kindliness, but ever accustomed to immediate gratification.

In this worldliness, moreover, is to be remarked the gamester's desperate play. There is a gambling spirit in human nature. Esau distinctly expresses this: "Behold I am at the point to die, and what shall my birthright profit me?" He might never live to enjoy his birthright; but the pottage was before him, present, certain, *there.*

Now, observe the utter powerlessness of mere preaching to cope with this tyrannical power of the present. Forty thousand pulpits throughout the land this day will declaim against the vanity of riches, the uncertainty of life, the sin of worldliness—against the gambling spirit of human nature; I ask what *impression* will be produced by those forty thousand harangues? In every congregation it is reducible to a certainty that, before a year has passed, some will be numbered with the dead. Every man knows this, but he thinks the chances are that it will not be himself; he feels it a solemn thing for humanity generally—but for himself there is more than a chance. Upon this chance he plays away life.

It is so with the child: you tell him of the consequences of to-day's idleness—but the sun is shining brightly, and he can not sacrifice to-day's pleasure, although he knows the disgrace it will bring to-morrow. So it is with the intemperate man: he says—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil and the good thereof; let me have my portion now." So the one great secret of the world's victory lies in the mighty power of saying "*Now.*"

2. The tyranny of the sensual.

I call it *tyranny*, because the evidences of the senses are all-powerful, in spite of the protestations of the reason. In vain you try to persuade the child that *he* is moving, and not the trees which seem to flit past the carriage—in vain we remind ourselves that this apparently solid earth on which we stand, and which seems so immovable, is in reality flying through the regions of space with an inconceivable rapidity—in vain philosophers would persuade us that the color which the eye beholds resides not in the object itself, but in our own perception; we are victims of the apparent, and the verdict of the senses is taken instead of the verdict of the reason.

Precisely so is it with the enjoyments of the world. The man who died yesterday, and whom the world called a successful man—for what did he live? He lived for this world

—he gained this world. Houses, lands, name, position in society—all that earth could give of enjoyments—he had: he was the man of whom the Redeemer said that his thoughts were occupied in planning how to pull down his barns and build greater. We hear men complain of the sordid love of gold, but gold is merely a medium of exchange for other things: gold is land, titles, name, comfort—all that the world can give. If the world be *all*, it is *wise* to live for gold. There may be some little difference in the degree of degradation in different forms of worldliness; it is possible that the ambitious man who lives for power is somewhat higher than he who merely lives for applause, and he again may be a trifle higher than the mere seeker after gold—but, after all, looking closely at the matter, you will find that, in respect of the objects of their idolatry, they agree in this, that all belong to the present. Therefore, says the apostle, all that is in the world—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world," and are only various forms of one great tyranny. And then, when such a man is at the brink of death, the words said to the man in our Lord's parable must be said to him, "Thou fool, the houses thou hast built, the enjoyments thou hast prepared, and all those things which have formed thy life for years—when thy soul is taken from them, what shall they profit thee?"

3. The spirit of society.

The *world* has various meanings in Scripture; it does not always mean the visible, as opposed to the invisible; nor the present, as opposed to the future: it sometimes stands for the secular spirit of the day—the voice of society.

Our Saviour says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." The apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world;" and to the Gentiles he writes, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience." In these verses, a tone, a temper, a spirit is spoken of. There are two things—the Church and the world—two spirits pervading different bodies of men, brought before us in these verses — those called the Spirit-born, and those called the world, which is to be overcome by the Spirit-born, as in the text, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

Let us understand what is meant by the Church of God. When we speak of the Church we generally mean a society to aid men in their progress Godward; but the Church of God is by no means co-extensive in any age with that organized institution which we *call* the Church; sometimes it is nearly co-extensive—that is, nearly all on earth who are born of God are found within its pale, nearly all who are of the world are extraneous to it—but sometimes the born of God have been found distinct from the institution called the Church, opposed to it—persecuted by it. The institution of the Church is a blessed ordinance of God, organized on earth for the purpose of representing the eternal Church and of extending its limits, but still ever subordinate to it.

The eternal Church is "the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven;" the selected spirits of the Most High, who are struggling with the evil of their day; sometimes alone, like Elijah, and like him, longing that their work was done; sometimes conscious of their union with each other. God is forever raising up a succession of these—His brave, His true, His good. Apostolical succession, as taught sometimes, means simply this—a succession of miraculous powers flowing in a certain line. The true apostolic succession is—not a succession in a hereditary line, or line marked by visible signs which men can always identify, but a succession emphatically spiritual.

The Jews looked for a hereditary succession; they thought that because they were Abraham's seed, the spiritual succession was preserved; the Redeemer told them that "God was able of those stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Therefore is this ever a spiritual succession—in the hands of God alone; and they are here called the God-born, coming into the world variously qualified; sometimes baptized with the spirit which makes them, like James and John, the "sons of thunder," sometimes with a milder spirit, as Barnabas, which makes them "sons of consolation," sometimes having their souls indurated into an adamantine hardness, which makes them living stones—rocks like Peter, against which the billows of this world dash themselves in vain, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. But whether as apostles, or visitors of the poor, or parents of a family, born to do a work on earth, to speak a word, to discharge a mission which they themselves perhaps do not know till it is accomplished—these are the Church of God—the children of the Most High—the noble army of the Spirit-born! Opposed to this stands the mighty confederacy called the world. But beware of fixing on individual men in order to stigmatize *them* as the world. You may not draw a line and say—"We are the sons of God, ye are of the world." The world is not so much individual as it is a certain spirit; the course of this world is "the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience." The world and the Church are annexed as inseparably as the elements which compose the atmosphere. Take the smallest portion of this that you will, in a cubic inch the same proportions are found as in a temple. In the ark there was a Ham; in the small band of the twelve apostles there was a Judas.

The spirit of the world is forever altering—impalpable; forever eluding, in fresh forms, your attempts to seize it. In the days of Noah, the spirit of the world was *violence.* In Elijah's day it was *idolatry.* In the day of Christ it was *power* concentrated and condensed in the government of Rome. In ours, perhaps, it is the *love of money.* It enters in different proportions into different bosoms; it is found in a different form in contiguous towns; in the fashionable watering-place, and in the commercial city: it is this thing at Athens, and another in Corinth. This is the spirit of the world—a thing in my heart and yours: to be struggled against, not so much in the case of others, as in the silent battle to be done within our own souls. Pass we on now to consider—

II. The victory of faith.

Faith is a theological expression; we are apt to forget that it has any other than a theological import; yet it is the commonest principle of man's daily life, called in that region prudence, enterprise, or some such name. It is in effect the principle on which alone any human superiority can be gained. Faith, in religion, is the same principle as faith in worldly matters, differing only in its object: it rises through successive stages. When, in reliance upon your promise, your child gives up the half-hour's idleness of to-day for the holiday of to-morrow, he lives by faith; a future supersedes the present pleasure. When he abstains from over-indulgence of the appetite, in reliance upon your word that the result will be pain and sickness, sacrificing the present pleasure for fear of future punishment, he acts on faith: I do not say that this is a high exercise of faith—it is a very low one —but it *is* faith.

Once more: the same motive of action may be carried on into manhood; in our own times two religious principles have been exemplified in the subjugation of a vice. The habit of intoxication has been broken by an appeal to the principle of combination, and the principle of belief. Men were taught to feel that they were not solitary strugglers against the vice; they were enrolled in a mighty army, identified in principles and interests. Here was the principle of the Church—association for reciprocated strength; they were thus taught the inevitable result of the indulgence of the vice. The missionaries of temperance went through the country contrasting the wretchedness and the degradation and the filth of drunkenness, with the domestic comfort and the health and the regular employment of those who were masters of themselves. So far as men believed this, and gave up the tyranny of the present for the hope of the future—so far they lived by faith.

Brethren, I do not say that this was a high triumph for the principle of faith; it was, in fact, little more than selfishness; it was a high future balanced against a low present; only the preference of a future and higher physical enjoyment to a mean and lower one. Yet still, to be ruled by this influence raises a man in the scale of being: it is a low virtue, prudence, a form of selfishness; yet prudence *is* a virtue. The merchant who forecasts, saves, denies himself systematically through years, to amass a fortune, is not a very lofty being, yet he is higher, as a man, than he who is sunk in mere bodily gratifications. You would not say that the intemperate man—who has become temperate in order merely to gain by that temperance honor and happiness—is a great man, but you would say he was a higher and a better man than he who is enslaved by his passions, or than the gambler who improvidently stakes all upon a moment's throw. The worldly mother who plans for the advancement of a family, and sacrifices solid enjoyments for a splendid alliance, is only *worldly* wise, yet in that manœuvring and worldly prudence there is the exercise of a self-control which raises her above the mere giddy pleasure-hunter of the hour; for want of self-control is the weakness of our nature—to restrain, to wait, to control present feeling with a large foresight, is human strength.

Once more: instead of a faith like that of the child, which overleaps a few hours, or that of the worldly man, which overpasses years, there may be a faith which transcends the whole span of life, and, instead of looking for temporal enjoyments, looks for rewards in a future beyond the grave, instead of a future limited to time.

This is again a step. The child has sacrificed a day; the man has sacrificed a little more. Faith has now reached a stage which deserves to be called religious; not that this, however, is very grand; it does but prefer a happiness hereafter to a happiness enjoyed here—an eternal well-being instead of a temporal well-being; it is but prudence on a grand scale—another form of selfishness—an anticipation of infinite rewards instead of finite. and not the more noble because of the infinitude of the gain: and yet this is what is often taught as religion in books and sermons. We are told that sin is wrong, because it will make us miserable hereafter. Guilt is represented as the short-sightedness which barters for a home on earth—a home in heaven.

In the text-book of ethics studied in one of our universities, virtue is defined as that which is done at the command of God for the sake of an eternal reward. So, then, religion is nothing more than a calculation of infinite and finite quantities; vice is nothing more than a grand imprudence; and heaven is nothing more than selfishness rewarded with eternal well-being!

Yet this, you will observe, is a necessary step in the development of faith. Faith is the conviction that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him; and there is a moment in human progress when the anticipated rewards and punishments must be of a Mohammedan character—the happiness of the senses. It was thus that the Jews were disciplined; out of a coarse, rude, infantine state, they were educated by rewards and punishments to abstain from present sinful gratification: at first, the promise of the life which now is, afterwards the promise of that which is to come; but even then the rewards and punishments of a future state were spoken of, by inspiration itself, as of an arbitrary character; and some of the best of the Israelites, in looking to the recompense of reward, seemed to have anticipated, coarsely, recompense in exchange for duties performed.

The last step is that which alone deserves to be called Christian faith—"Who is he that overcometh but he that believeth Jesus is the Christ?" The difference between the faith of the Christian and that of the man of the world, or the mere ordinary religionist, is not a difference in mental operation, but in the object of the faith—to believe that Jesus is the Christ is the peculiarity of Christian faith.

The anticipated heaven of the Christian differs from the anticipated heaven of any other man, not in the distinctness with which its imagery is perceived, but in the kind of objects which are hoped for. The apostle has told us the character of heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"—which glorious words are sometimes strangely misinterpreted, as if the apostle merely meant rhetorically to exalt the conception of the heavenly world, as of something beyond all power to imagine or to paint. The apostle meant something infinitely deeper: the heaven of God is not only that which "eye hath not seen," but that which eye can *never* see; its glories are not of that kind at all which can ever stream in forms of beauty on the eye, or pour in melody upon the enraptured ear—not such joys as genius in its most gifted hour (here called "the heart of man") can invent or imagine: it is something which these sensuous organs of ours never can appreciate—bliss of another kind altogether, revealed to the spirit of man by the Spirit of God—joys such as spirit alone can receive.

Do you ask what these are? "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." That is heaven, and therefore the apostle tells us that he alone who "believeth that Jesus is the Christ," and only he, feels that. What is it to believe that Jesus is the Christ?—That He is the Anointed One, that His life is the anointed life, the only blessed life, the blessed life Divine for thirty years? Yes, but if so, the blessed life still, continued throughout all eternity: unless you believe that, you do not believe that Jesus is the Christ.

What is the blessedness that you expect?—to have the joys of earth with the addition of the element of eternity? Men think that heaven is to be a compensation for earthly loss: the saints are earthly-wretched here, the children of this world are earthly-happy; but *that*, they think, shall be all reversed—Lazarus, beyond the grave, shall have the purple and the fine linen, and the splendor, and the houses, and the lands which Dives had on earth: the one had them for time, the other shall have them for eternity. That is the heaven that men expect—this earth sacrificed *now*, in order that it may be re-granted *forever*.

Nor will this expectation be reversed except by a reversal of the nature. None can anticipate such a heaven as God has revealed, except they that are born of the Spirit; therefore to believe that Jesus is the Christ, a man must be born of God. You will observe that no other victory overcomes the world: for this is what St. John means by saying, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" For then it comes to pass that a man begins to feel that to do wrong is hell; and that to love God, to be like God, to have the mind of Christ, is the only heaven. Until this victory is gained, the world retains its stronghold in the heart.

Do you think that the temperate man has overcome the world, who, instead of the short-lived rapture of intoxication, chooses regular employment, health, and prosperity? Is it not the world in another form which has his homage? Or do you suppose that the so-called religious man is really the world's conqueror by being content to give up seventy years of enjoyment in order to win innumerable ages of the very same species of enjoyment? Has he not only made earth a hell, in order that earthly things may be his heaven forever?

Thus the victory of faith proceeds from stage to stage: the first victory is, when the present is conquered by the future; the last, when the visible and sensual is despised in comparison of the invisible and eternal. Then earth has lost its power forever; for if *all* that it has to give be lost eternally, the gain of faith is still infinite.

III.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."—1 Cor. xii. 4.

According to a view which contains in it a profound truth, the ages of the world are divisible into three dispensations, presided over by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

In the dispensation of the Father, God was known as a Creator; creation manifested His eternal power and Godhead, and the religion of mankind was the religion of nature.

In the dispensation of the Son, God manifested Himself to humanity through man; the Eternal Word spoke, through the inspired and gifted of the human race, to those that were uninspired and ungifted. This was the dispensation of the prophets—its climax was the advent of the Redeemer; it was completed when *perfect* Humanity manifested God to man. The characteristic of this dispensation was, that God revealed Himself by an authoritative Voice, speaking from without, and the highest manifestation of God whereof man was capable, was a Divine humanity.

The age in which we at present live is the dispensation of the Spirit, in which God has communicated Himself by the highest revelation, and in the most intimate communion, of which man is capable; no longer through creation, no more as an authoritative Voice from without, but as a Law within—as a Spirit mingling with a spirit. This is the dispensation of which the prophet said of old, that the time should come when they should no longer teach every man his brother and every man his neighbor, saying, "Know the Lord"—

that is, by a will revealed by external authority from other human minds—"for they shall all know Him, from the least of them to the greatest." This is the dispensation, too, of whose close the Apostle Paul speaks thus: "Then shall the Son also be subject to Him that hath put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

The outward humanity is to disappear, that the inward union may be complete. To the same effect, he speaks in another place, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more." For this reason the ascension was necessary before Pentecost could come: the Spirit was not given, we are told, because Jesus was not yet glorified. It was necessary for the Son to disappear as an outward authority, in order that He might re-appear as an inward principle of life. Our salvation is no longer God manifested in a Christ *without* us, but as a Christ *within* us, the hope of glory. To-day is the selected anniversary of that memorable day when the first proof was given to the senses, in the gift of Pentecost, that that spiritual dispensation had begun.

There is a twofold way in which the operations of the Spirit on mankind may be considered—His influence on the Church as a whole, and His influence on individuals; both of these are brought together in the text. It branches, therefore, into a twofold division.

I. Spiritual gifts conferred on individuals.
II. Spiritual union of the Church.

Let us distinguish between the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit: by the Spirit, the apostle meant the vital principle of new life from God, common to all believers—the animating Spirit of the Church of God; by the gifts of the Spirit, he meant the diversities of form in which He operates on individuals; its influence varied according to their respective peculiarities and characteristics. In the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter a full catalogue of gifts is found; looking at them generally, we discover two classes into which they may be divided—the first are natural, the second are supernatural: the first are those capacities which are originally found in human nature—personal endowments of mind, a character elevated and enlarged by the gift of the Spirit; the second are those which were created and called into existence by the sudden approach of the same influence.

Just as if the temperature of this northern hemisphere were raised suddenly, and a mighty tropical river were to pour its fertilizing inundation over the country, the result would be the impartation of a vigorous and gigantic growth to the vegetation already in existence, and at the same time the development of life in seeds and germs which had long lain latent in the soil, incapable of vegetation in the unkindly climate of their birth. Exactly in the same way, the flood of a Divine life, poured suddenly into the souls of men, enlarged and ennobled qualities which had been used already, and at the same time *developed* powers which never could have become apparent in the cold, low temperature of natural life.

Among the natural gifts, we may instance these: teaching —healing—the power of government. Teaching is a gift, natural or acquired. To know, is one thing; to have the capacity of imparting knowledge, is another.

The physician's art, again, is no supernatural mystery; long and careful study of physical laws capacitate him for his task. To govern, again, is a natural faculty: it may be acquired by habit, but there are some who never could acquire it. Some men seem born to command: place them in what sphere you will, others acknowledge their secret influence and subordinate themselves to their will. The faculty of organization, the secret of rule, need no supernatural power. They exist among the uninspired. Now the doctrine of the apostle was, that all these are transformed and renovated by the spirit of a new life in such a way as to become almost new powers, or, as he calls them, gifts of the Spirit. A remarkable illustration of this is his view of the human body. If there be any thing common to us by nature, it is the members of our corporeal frame; yet the apostle taught that these, guided by the Spirit as its instruments and obeying a holy will, became transfigured; so that, in his language, the body becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the meanest faculties, the lowest appetites, the humblest organs, are ennobled by the Spirit-mind which guides them. Thus he bids the Romans yield themselves "unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

The second class of gifts are supernatural: of these we find two pre-eminent—the gift of tongues, and the gift of prophecy.

It does not appear that the gift of tongues was merely the imparted faculty of speaking foreign languages—it could not be that the highest gift of God to His Church merely made them rivals of the linguist; it would rather seem that the Spirit of God, mingling with the soul of man, supernaturally elevated its aspirations and glorified its conceptions, so that an entranced state of ecstacy was produced, and feelings called into energy, for the expression of which the ordinary forms of speech were found inadequate. Even in a far lower department, when a man becomes possessed of ideas for which his ordinary vocabulary supplies no sufficient expression, his language becomes broken, incoherent, struggling, and almost unnaturally elevated; much more was it to be expected that when divine and new feelings rushed like a flood upon the soul, the language of men would have become strange and extraordinary; but in that supposed case, wild as the expressions might appear to one coldly looking on and not participating in the feelings of the speaker, they would be quite sufficient to convey intelligible meaning to any one affected by the same emotions.

Where perfect sympathy exists, incoherent utterance—a word—a syllable—is quite as efficient as elaborate sentences. Now this is precisely the account given of the phenomenon which attended the gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost, all who were in the same state of spiritual emotion as those who spoke, understood the speakers; each was as intelligible to all as if he spoke in their several tongues: to those who were coolly and skeptically watching, the effects appeared like those of intoxication. A similar account is given by the Apostle Paul: the voice appeared to unsympathetic ears as that of a barbarian; the uninitiated and unbelieving coming in, heard nothing that was articulate to them, but only what seemed to them the ravings of insanity.

The next was the gift of prophecy. Prophecy has several meanings in Scripture; sometimes it means the power of predicting future events, sometimes an entranced state accompanied with ravings, sometimes it appears to mean only exposition; but prophecy, as the miraculous spiritual gift granted to the early Church, seems to have been a state of communion with the mind of God lower than that which was called the gift of tongues, at least less ecstatic, less rapt into the world to come, more under the guidance of the reason, more within the control of calm consciousness—as we might say, less supernatural.

Upon these gifts we make two observations:

1. Even the highest were not accompanied with spiritual faultlessness. Inspiration was one thing, infallibility another. The gifts of the Spirit were, like the gifts of nature, subordinated to the will—capable of being used for good or evil, sometimes pure, sometimes mixed with human infirmity. The supernaturally gifted man was no mere machine, no automaton ruled in spite of himself by a superior spirit. Disorder

vanity, overweening self-estimation, might accompany these gifts, and the prophetic utterance itself might be degraded to a mere brawling in the Church; therefore St. Paul established laws of control, declared the need of subjection and rule over spiritual gifts: the spirits of the prophets were to be subject to the prophets; if those in the ecstatic state were tempted to break out into utterance and unable to interpret what it meant, those so gifted were to hold their peace.

The prophet poured out the truths supernaturally imparted to his highest spirit, in an inspired and impassioned eloquence which was intelligible even to the unspiritual, and was one of the appointed means of convincing the unconverted. The lesson derivable from this is not obsolete even in the present day. There is nothing perhaps precisely identical in our own day with those gifts of the early Church; but genius and talent are uncommon gifts, which stand in a somewhat analogous relation—in a closer one certainly—than more ordinary endowments. The flights of genius, we know, appear like maniac ravings to minds not elevated to the same spiritual level. Now these are perfectly compatible with misuse, abuse, and moral disorder. The most gifted of our countrymen has left this behind him as his epitaph, "The greatest, wisest, *meanest* of mankind." The most glorious gift of poetic insight—itself in a way divine—having something akin to Deity—is too often associated with degraded life and vicious character. Those gifts which elevate us above the rest of our species, whereby we stand aloof and separate from the crowd, convey no moral—nor even mental—infallibility: nay, they have in themselves a peculiar danger, whereas, that gift which is common to us all as brethren, the animating spirit of a divine life, in whose soil the spiritual being of all is rooted, can not make us vain; we *can not* pride ourselves on *that*, for it is common to us all.

2. Again, the gifts which were higher in one sense were lower in another; as supernatural gifts they would rank thus—the gift of tongues before prophecy, and prophecy before teaching; but as blessings to be desired, this order is reversed: rather than the gift of tongues, St. Paul bids the Corinthians desire that they might prophesy. Inferior, again, to prophecy was the quite simple, and as we should say, lower faculty of explaining truth. Now the principle upon which that was tried was that of utility—not utility in the low sense of the utilitarian, who measures the value of a thing by its susceptibility of application to the purpose of this present life, but a utility whose measure was love, charity. The apostle considered *that* gift most desirable by which men might most

edify one another. And hence that noble declaration of one of the most gifted of mankind—"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Our estimate is almost the reverse of this: we value a gift in proportion to its rarity, its distinctive character, separating its possessor from the rest of his fellow-men; whereas, in truth, those gifts which leave us in lonely majesty apart from our species, useless to them, benefiting ourselves alone, are not the most Godlike, but the least so; because they are dissevered from that beneficent charity which is the very being of God. Your lofty incommunicable thoughts, your ecstasies, and aspirations, and contemplative raptures—in virtue of which you have estimated yourself as the porcelain of the earth, of another nature altogether than the clay of common spirits—tried by the test of charity, what is there grand in these if they can not be applied as blessings to those that are beneath you? One of our countrymen has achieved for himself extraordinary scientific renown; he pierced the mysteries of nature, he analyzed her processes, he gave new elements to the world. The same man applied his rare intellect to the construction of a simple and very common instrument—that well-known lamp which has been the guardian of the miner's life from the explosion of fire. His discoveries are his nobility in this world, his trifling invention gives him rank in the world to come. By the former he shines as one of the brightest luminaries in the firmament of science, by the latter, evincing a spirit animated and directed by Christian love, he takes his place as one of the Church of God.

And such is ever the true order of rank which graces occupy in reference to gifts. The most trifling act which is marked by usefulness to others is nobler in God's sight than the most brilliant accomplishment of genius. To teach a few Sunday-school children, week after week, commonplace, simple truths—persevering in spite of dullness and mean capacities—is a more glorious occupation than the highest meditations or creations of genius which edify or instruct only our own solitary soul.

II. The spiritual unity of the Church—"the same Spirit."

Men have formed to themselves two ideas of unity: the first is a sameness of form—of expression; the second an identity of spirit. Some of the best of mankind have fondly hoped to realize an unity for the Church of Christ which should be manifested by uniform expressions in every thing; their imaginations have loved to paint, as the ideal of a

Christian Church, a state in which the same liturgy should be used throughout the world, the same ecclesiastical government, even the same vestments, the same canonical hours, the same form of architecture. They could conceive nothing more entirely one than a Church so constituted that the same prayers, in the very same expressions, at the very same moment, should be ascending to the Eternal Ear.

There are others who have thrown aside entirely this idea as chimerical; who have not only ceased to hope it, but even to wish it; who, if it could be realized, would consider it a matter of regret; who feel that the minds of men are various—their modes and habits of thought, their original capacities and acquired associations, infinitely diverse; and who, perceiving that the law of the universal system is manifoldness in unity, have ceased to expect any other oneness for the Church of Christ than that of a sameness of spirit, showing itself through diversities of gifts. Among these last was the Apostle Paul: his large and glorious mind rejoiced in the contemplation of the countless manifestations of spiritual nature beneath which he detected one and the same pervading Mind. Now let us look at this matter somewhat more closely.

1. All real unity is manifold. Feelings in themselves identical find countless forms of expression; for instance, sorrow is the same feeling throughout the human race; but the Oriental prostrates himself upon the ground, throws dust upon his head, tears his garments, is not ashamed to break out into the most violent lamentations. In the north, we rule our grief in public; suffer not even a quiver to be seen upon the lip or brow, and consider calmness as the appropriate expression of manly grief. Nay, two sisters of different temperament will show their grief diversely; one will love to dwell upon the theme of the qualities of the departed, the other feels it a sacred sorrow, on which the lips are sealed forever; yet would it not be idle to ask which of them has the truest affection? Are they not both in their own way true? In the same East, men take off their sandals in devotion; we exactly reverse the procedure, and uncover the head. The Oriental prostrates himself in the dust before his sovereign; even before his God the Briton only kneels; yet would it not again be idle to ask which is the essential and proper form of reverence? Is not true reverence in all cases modified by the individualities of temperament and education? Should we not say, in all these forms worketh one and the same spirit of reverence?

Again, in the world as God has made it, one law shows itself under diverse, even opposite manifestations; lead sinks in water, wood floats upon the surface. In former times men assigned these different results to different forces, laws, and gods. A knowledge of nature has demonstrated that they are expressions of one and the same law; and the great difference between the educated and the uneducated man is this—the uneducated sees in this world nothing but an infinite collection of unconnected facts—a broken, distorted, and fragmentary system, which his mind can by no means reduce to order. The educated man, in proportion to his education, sees the number of laws diminished—beholds in the manifold appearances of nature the expression of a few laws, by degrees fewer, till at last it becomes possible to his conception that they are all reducible to one, and that that which lies beneath the innumerable phenomena of nature is the One Spirit—God.

2. All *living* unity is spiritual, not formal; not sameness, but manifoldness. You may have a unity shown in identity of form; but it is a lifeless unity. There is a sameness on the sea-beach—that unity which the ocean waves have produced by curling and forcibly destroying the angularities of individual form, so that every stone presents the same monotony of aspect, and you must fracture each again in order to distinguish whether you hold in your hand a mass of flint or fragment of basalt. There is no life in unity such as this.

But as soon as you arrive at a unity that is living, the form becomes more complex, and you search in vain for uniformity. In the parts, it must be found, if found at all, in the sameness of the pervading life. The illustration given by the apostle is that of the human body—a higher unity, he says, by being composed of many members, than if every member were but a repetition of a single type. It is conceivable that God might have moulded such a form for human life; it is conceivable that every cause, instead of producing in different nerves a variety of sensations, should have affected every one in a mode precisely similar; that instead of producing a sensation of sound—a sensation of color—a sensation of taste—the outward causes of nature, be they what they may, should have given but one unvaried feeling to every sense, and that the whole universe should have been light or sound.

That would have been unity; if sameness be unity; but, says the apostle, "if the whole body were seeing, where were the hearing?" That uniformity would have been irreparable loss —the loss of every part that was merged into the one. What is the body's unity? Is it not this? The unity of a living consciousness which marvellously animates every separate atom of the frame, and reduces each to the performance of a function fitted to the welfare of the whole—its own, not another's: so that the inner spirit can say of the remotest, and in form most unlike, member, "That, too, is myself."

3. None but a spiritual unity can preserve the rights both of the individual and the Church. All other systems of unity, except the apostolic, either sacrifice the Church to the individual, or the individual to the Church.

Some have claimed the right of private judgment in such a way that every individual opinion becomes truth, and every utterance of private conscience right: thus the Church is sacrificed to the individual; and the universal conscience, the common faith, becomes as nothing; the spirits of the prophets are not subject to the prophets. Again, there are others, who, like the Church of Rome, would surrender the conscience of each man to the conscience of the Church, and coerce the particulars of faith into exact coincidence with a formal creed. Spiritual unity saves the right of both in God's system. The Church exists for the individual, just as truly as the individual for the Church. The Church is then most perfect when all its powers converge, and are concentrated on the formation and protection of individual character; and the individual is then most complete—that is, most a Christian—when he has practically learned that his life is not his own, but owed to others—"that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

Now, spiritual unity respects the sanctity of the individual conscience. How reverently the Apostle Paul considered its claims, and how tenderly! When once it became a matter of conscience, this was his principle laid down in matters of dispute: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The belief of the whole world can not make that thing true to me which to me seems false. The conscience of the whole world can not make a thing right to me, if I in my heart believe it wrong. You may coerce the conscience, you may control men's belief, and you may produce a unity by so doing; but it is the unity of pebbles on the sea-shore—a lifeless identity of outward form with no cohesion between the parts—a dead sea-beach on which nothing grows, and where the very sea-weed dies.

Lastly, it respected the sanctity of individual character. Out of eight hundred millions of the human race, a few features diversify themselves into so many forms of countenance, that scarcely two could be mistaken for each other. There are no two leaves on the same tree alike; nor two sides of the same leaf, unless you cut and kill it. There is a sacredness in individuality of character; each one born into this world is a fresh new soul intended by his Maker to develop himself in a new fresh way; we are what we are; we can not be truly other than ourselves. We reach perfection not by copying, much less by aiming at originality; but by consistently and steadily working out the life which is common to us all, according to the character which God has given us.

And thus will the Church of God be one at last—will present an unity like that of heaven. There is one universe, in which each separate star differs from another in glory; one Church, in which a single Spirit, the Life of God, pervades each separate soul; and just in proportion as that Life becomes exalted does it enable every one to shine forth in the distinctness of his own separate individuality, like the stars of heaven.

IV.

THE TRINITY.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thess. v. 23.

The knowledge of God is the blessedness of man. To know God, and to be known by him—to love God, and to be loved by Him—is the most precious treasure which this life has to give; properly speaking, the only treasure; properly speaking, the only knowledge; for all knowledge is valuable only so far as it converges towards and ends in the knowledge of God, and enables us to acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace with Him. The doctrine of the Trinity is the sum of all that knowledge which has as yet been gained by man. I say gained *as yet.* For we presume not to maintain that in the ages which are to come hereafter, our knowledge shall not be superseded by a higher knowledge; we presume not to say that in a state of existence future—yea even here upon this earth, at that period which is mysteriously referred to in Scripture as "the coming of the Son of Man"—there shall not be given to the soul an intellectual conception of the Almighty, a vision of the Eternal, in comparison with whose brightness and clearness our present knowledge of the Trinity shall be as rudimentary and as childlike as the knowledge of the Jew was in comparison with the knowledge of the Christian.

Now the passage which I have undertaken to expound to-day is one in which the doctrine of the Trinity is brought into connection practically with the doctrine of our humanity. Before entering into it, brethren, let us lay down these two observations and duties for ourselves. In the first place, let us examine the doctrine of the Trinity ever in the spirit of charity.

A clear statement of the deepest doctrine that man can know, and the intellectual conception of that doctrine, are by no means easy. We are puzzled and perplexed by *words;* we fight respecting *words.* Quarrels are nearly always verbal quarrels. Words lose their meaning in the course of time; nay, the very words of the Athanasian creed which we read to-day mean not in this age the same thing which they meant in ages past. Therefore it is possible that men, externally Trinitarians, may differ from each other though using the same words, as greatly as a Unitarian differs from a Trinitarian. There may be found, in the same Church and in the same congregation, men holding all possible shades of opinion, though agreeing externally and in words.

I speak within the limit of my own experience when I say that persons have been known and heard to express the language of bitter condemnation respecting Unitarianism, who when examined and calmly required to draw out verbally the meaning of their own conceptions, have been proved to be holding all the time, unconsciously, the very doctrine of Sabellianism. And this doctrine is condemned by the Church as distinctly as that of Unitarianism. Therefore let us learn from all this a large and catholic charity. There are in almost every congregation, themselves not knowing it, Trinitarians who are practically Tri-theists, worshipping three Gods; and Sabellians, or worshippers of one person under three different manifestations. To know God so that we may be said intellectually to appreciate Him, is blessed: to be unable to do so is a misfortune. Be content with your own blessedness, in comparison with others' misfortunes. Do not give to that misfortune the additional sting of illiberal and unchristian vituperation.

The next observation we have to lay down for ourselves is, that we should examine this doctrine in the spirit of modesty. There are those who are inclined to sneer at the Trinitarian; those to whom the doctrine appears merely a contradiction—a puzzle—an entangled, labyrinthine enigma, in which there is no meaning whatever. But let all such remember, that though the doctrine may appear to them absurd, because they have not the proper conception of it, some of the profoundest thinkers, and some of the holiest spirits among mankind, have believed in this doctrine—have clung to it as a matter of life or death. Let them be assured of this, that whether the doctrine be true or false, it is not necessarily a doctrine self-contradictory. Let them be assured of this, in all modesty, that such men never could have held it unless there was latent in the doctrine a deep truth—perchance the truth of God.

We pass on now to the consideration of this verse under the following divisions. In the first place, we shall view it as a triad in discord: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless;" in the second place, as a Trinity in unity: "the God of peace sanctify you wholly." We take then, first of all, for our consideration the triad in discord: "I pray God your whole body and soul and spirit be preserved blameless."

The apostle here divides human nature into a threefold division; and here we have to observe again the difficulty often experienced in understanding words. Thus words in the Athanasian creed have become obsolete, or lost their meaning: so that in the present day the words "person," "substance," "procession," "generation," to an ordinary person, mean almost nothing. So this language of the apostle, when rendered into English, shows no difference whatever between "soul" and "spirit." We say, for instance, that the soul of a man has departed from him. We also say that the spirit of a man has departed from him. There is no distinct difference between the two; but in the original two very different kinds of thoughts—two very different modes of conception—are represented by the two English words "soul" and "spirit."

It is our business, therefore, in the first place, to understand what is meant by this threefold division. When the apostle speaks of the body, what he means is the animal life—that which we share in common with beasts, birds, and reptiles; for our life, my Christian brethren—our sensational existence—differs but little from that of the lower animals. There is the same external form, the same material in the blood-vessels, in the nerves, and in the muscular system. Nay, more than that, our appetites and instincts are alike, our lower pleasures like their lower pleasures, our lower pain like their lower pain, our life is supported by the same means, and our animal functions are almost indistinguishably the same.

But, once more, the apostle speaks of what he calls the "soul." What the apostle meant by what is translated "soul," is the immortal part of man—the immaterial as distinguished from the material: those powers, in fact, which man has by nature—powers natural, which are yet to survive the grave. There is a distinction made in Scripture by our Lord between these two things. "Fear not," says He, "them who can kill the body; but rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell."

We have again to observe respecting this, that what the apostle called the "soul," is not simply distinguishable from the body, but also from the spirit; and on that distinction I have already touched. By the soul the apostle means our powers natural—the powers which we have by nature. Herein is the soul distinguishable from the spirit. In the Epistle to the Corinthians we read—"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." Observe, there is a distinction drawn between the natural man and the spiritual. What is there translated "natural" is derived from precisely the same word as that which is here translated "soul." So that we may read just as correctly: "The man under the dominion of the soul receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." And again, the apostle, in the same Epistle to the Corinthians, writes: "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural:" that is, the endowments of the soul precede the endowments of the spirit. You have the same truth in other places. The powers that belong to the spirit were not the first developed; but the powers which belong to the soul—that is, the powers of nature. Again in the same chapter, reference is made to the natural and spiritual body. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." Literally, there is a body governed by the soul—that is, powers natural: and there is a body governed by the spirit—that is, higher nature.

Let then this be borne in mind, that what the apostle calls "soul" is the same as that which he calls, in another place, the "natural man." These powers are divisible into two branches—the intellectual powers and the moral sense. The intellectual powers man has by nature. Man need not be regenerated in order to possess the power of reasoning, or in order to invent. The intellectual powers belong to what the apostle calls the "soul." The moral sense distinguishes between right and wrong. The apostle tells us, in the Epistle to the Romans, that the heathen—manifestly natural men—had the "work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness."

The third division of which the apostle speaks, he calls the "spirit;" and by the spirit he means that life in man which, in his natural state, is in such an embryo condition that it can scarcely be said to exist at all—that which is called out into power and vitality by regeneration—the perfection of the powers of human nature. And you will observe, that it is not merely the instinctive life, nor the intellectual life, nor the moral life, but it is principally our nobler affections—that existence, that state of being which we call love. That is the department of human nature which the apostle calls the spirit; and accordingly, when the Spirit of God was given on the day of Pentecost, you will remember that another power of man was called out, differing from what he had before. That Spirit granted on the day of Pentecost did subordinate to Himself, and was intended to subordinate to Himself, the will, the understanding, and the affection of man; but you often find these spiritual powers were distinguished from the natural powers, and existed without them.

So in the highest state of religious life, we are told, men prayed in the spirit. Till the spirit has subordinated the understanding, the gift of God is not complete—has not done its work. It is abundantly evident that a new life was called out. It was not merely the sharpening of the intellectual powers; it was calling out powers of aspiration and love to God; those affections which have in them something boundless, that are not limited to this earth, but seek their completion in the mind of God Himself.

Now, what we have to say respecting this threefold state of man is, it is a state of discord. Let us take up a very simple, popular, everyday illustration. We hear it remarked frequently in conversation of a man, that if only his will were commensurate with his knowledge, he would be a great man. His knowledge is great—his powers are almost unbounded; he has gained knowledge from nearly every department of science; but somehow or other—you can not tell why—there is such an indecision, such a vacillation about the man, that he scarcely knows what to do, and, perhaps does nothing in this world. You find it remarked, respecting another class of men, that their will is strong, almost unbounded in its strength—they have iron wills, yet there is something so narrow in their conceptions, something so bounded in their views, so much of stagnation in their thoughts, so much of prejudice in all their opinions, that their will is prevented from being directed to any thing in a proper manner. Here is the discord in human nature. There is a distinction between the will and the understanding. And sometimes a feeble will goes with a strong understanding, or a powerful will is found in connection with great feebleness or ignorance of the understanding.

Let us, however, go into this more specially. The first cause of discord in this threefold state of man is the state in which the body is the ruler; and this, my Christian brethren, you find most visibly developed in the uneducated and irreligious poor. I say uneducated and irreligious, because it is by no means education alone which can subordinate the flesh to the higher man. The religious uneducated poor man may be master of his lower passions; but in the uneducated and irreligious poor man these show themselves in full force; this discord, this want of unity, appears, as it were, in a magnified form. There is a strong man—health bursting, as it were, at every pore, with an athletic body; but coarse, and rude, and intellectually weak—almost an animal. When you are regarding the upper classes of society, you see less distinctly the absence of the spirit, unless you look with a spiritual eye. The coarseness has passed away, the rudeness is no longer seen: there is a refinement in the pleasure. But if you take the life led by the young men of our country—strong, athletic, healthy men—it is still the life of the flesh: the unthinking and the unprincipled life in which there is as yet no higher life developed. It is a life which, in spite of its refinement, the Bible condemns as the life of the sensualist.

We pass on now to another state of discord—a state in which the soul is ruined. Brethren, this is a natural result—this is what might have been expected. The natural man gradually subordinates the flesh, the body, to the soul. It is natural in the development of individuals, it is natural in the development of society: in the development of individuals, because that childlike, infantine life which exists at first, and is almost entirely a life of appetites, gradually subsides. Higher wants, higher desires, loftier inclinations arise; the passions of the young man gradually subside, and by degrees the more rational life comes: the life is changed—the pleasures of the senses are forsaken for those of the intellect.

It appears natural, again, in the development of society.

Civilization will subordinate the flesh to the soul. In the savage state you find the life of the animal. Civilization is teaching a man, on the principle of this world, to subordinate his appetites; to rule himself; and there comes a refinement, and a gentleness, and a polish, and an enjoyment of intellectual pleasures; so that the man is no longer what the apostle calls a sensual man, but he becomes now what the apostle calls a natural man. We can see this character delineated in the Epistle to the Ephesians. "Then we were," says the apostle, "in our Gentile state, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Man naturally fulfills not merely the desires of the flesh, but the desires of the mind. "And were," says the apostle, "children of wrath."

One of the saddest spectacles is the decay of the natural man before the work of the Spirit has been accomplished in him. When the savage dies—when a mere infant dies—when an animal dies—there is nothing that is appalling or depressing there; but when the high, the developed intellect—when the cultivated man comes to the last hours of life, and the memory becomes less powerful, and the judgment fails, and all that belongs to nature and to earth visibly perishes, and the higher life has not been yet developed, though it is destined to survive the grave forever—even the life of God—there is here ample cause for grief; and it is no wonder that the man of genius merely should shed tears at the idea of decaying life.

We pass on to consider the Trinity in unity. All this is contained in that simple expression, "The God of peace." God is a God of unity. He makes one where before there were two. He is the God of peace, and therefore can make peace. Now this peace, according to the Trinitarian doctrine, consists in a threefold unity. Brethren, as we remarked, respecting this first of all, the distinction in this Trinity is not a physical distinction, but a metaphysical one. The illustrations which are often given are illustrations drawn from material sources: if we take only those, we get into contradiction: for example, when we talk of personality, our idea is of a being bounded by space; and then to say in this sense that three persons are one, and one is three, is simply contradictory and absurd. Remember that the doctrine of the Trinity is a metaphysical doctrine. It is a Trinity—a division in the mind of God. It is not three materials; it is three persons in a sense we shall explain by-and-by.

In the next place I will endeavor to explain the doctrine—not to prove it, but to show its rationality, and to explain what it is.

The first illustration we endeavor to give in this is taken from the world of matter. We will take any material substance: we find in that substance qualities; we will say three qualities—color, shape and size. Color is not shape, shape is not size, size is not color. They are three distinct essences, three distinct qualities, and yet they all form one unity, one single conception, one idea—the idea, for example, of a tree.

Now we will ascend from that into the immaterial world; and here we come to something more distinct still. Hitherto we have had but three qualities; we now come to the mind of man—where we find something more than qualities. We will take three—the will, the affections, and the thoughts of man. His will is not his affections, neither are his affections his thoughts; and it would be imperfect and incomplete to say that these are mere qualities in the man. They are separate consciousnesses—living consciousnesses—as distinct and as really sundered as it is possible for three things to be, yet bound together by one unity of consciousness. Now we have distincter proof than even this that these things are three. The anatomist can tell you that the localities of these powers are different. He can point out the seat of the nerve of sensation; he can localize the feeling of affection; he can point to a nerve and say, "There resides the locality of thought."

There are three distinct localities for three distinct qualities, personalities, consciousnesses; yet all these three are one.

Once more, we will give proof even beyond all that. The act that a man does is done by one particular part of that man. You may say it was a work of his genius, or of his fancy; it may have been a manifestation of his love, or an exhibition of his courage; yet that work was the work of the whole man: his courage, his intellect, his habits of perseverance, all helped towards the completion of that single work. Just in this way certain special works are attributed to certain personalities of the Deity; the work of redemption being attributed to one, the work of sanctification to another. And yet just as the whole man was engaged in doing that work, so does the whole Deity perform that work which is attributed to one essential.

Once more, let us remember that principle which we expounded last Sunday, that it is the law of being that in proportion as you rise from lower to higher life, the parts are more distinctly developed, while yet the unity becomes more entire. You find, for example, in the lowest forms of animal life one organ performs several functions, one organ being at the same time heart and brain and blood-vessels. But when you come to man, you find all these various functions existing in different organs, and every organ more distinctly developed; and yet the unity of a man is a higher unity than that of a limpet. When you come from the material world to the world immaterial, you find that the more society is cultivated, the more man is cultivated, the more marvellous is the power of developing distinct powers. In the savage life it is almost all one feeling; but in proportion as the higher education advances and the higher life appears, every power and faculty develops and distinguishes itself and becomes distinct and separate. And yet just in proportion as in a nation every part is distinct, the unity is greater, and just in proportion as in an individual every power is most complete, and stands out most distinct, just in that proportion has the man reached the entireness of his humanity.

Now, brethren, we apply all this to the mind of God. The Trinitarian maintains against the Unitarian and the Sabellian, that the higher you ascend in the scale of being, the more distinct are the consciousnesses, and that the law of unity implies and demands a manifold unity. The doctrine of Sabellianism, for example, is this: that God is but one essence—but one person under different manifestations; and that when He made the world He was called the Father, when He redeemed the world He was called the Son, and when he sanctified the world He was called the Holy Ghost. The Sabellian and the Unitarian maintain that the unity of God consists simply in a unity of person, and in opposition to this does the Trinitarian maintain that grandness, either in man or in God, must be a unity of manifoldness.

But we will enter into this more deeply. The first power of consciousness in which God is made known to us is as the Father, the Author of our being. It is written, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is the Author of all life. In this sense He is not merely our Father as Christians, but the Father of mankind; and not merely the Father of mankind, but the Father of creation; and in this way the sublime language of the prophets may be taken as true literally, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and the language of the canticle which belongs to our morning service, "the deeps, the fountains, the wells," all unite in one hymn of praise, one everlasting hallelujah to God the Father, the Author of their being. In this respect, simply as the Author of life, merely as the Supreme Being, God has reference to us in relation to the body. He is the Lord of life: in Him we live, and move, and have our being. In this respect God to us is as law—as the collected laws of the universe; and therefore to offend against law, and bring down the result of transgressing law, is said in Scripture language, because applied to a person, to be provoking the wrath of God the Father.

In the next place, the second way through which the personality and consciousness of God has been revealed to us is as the Son. Brethren, we see in all those writers who have treated of the Trinity, that much stress is laid upon this eternal generation of the Son, the everlasting sonship. It is this which we have in the creed—the creed which was read to-day—" God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;" and, again, in the Nicene creed, that expression, which is so often wrongly read, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," means absolutely nothing. There are two statements made there. The first is this, "The Son was God:" the second is this, "The Son was—*of* God," showing his derivation. And in that, brethren, we have one of the deepest and most blessed truths of revelation. The Unitarian maintains a divine humanity—a blessed, blessed truth. There is a truth more blessed still—the humanity of Deity. Before the world was, there was that in the mind of God which we may call the humanity of His Divinity. It is called in Scripture the Word: the Son: the Form of God. It is in virtue of this that we have a right to attribute to Him our own feelings; it is in virtue of this that Scripture speaks of His wisdom, His justice, His love. Love in God is what love is in man; justice in God is what justice is in man; creative power in God is what creative power is in man; indignation in God is that which indignation is in man, barring only this, that the one is emotional, but the other is calm, and pure, and everlastingly still. It is through this humanity in the mind of God, if I may dare so to speak of Deity, that a revelation became possible to man. It was the Word that was made flesh; it was the Word that manifested itself to man. It is in virtue of the connection between God and man, that God made man in His own image; that through a long line of prophets the human truth of God could be made known to man, till it came forth developed most entirely and at large in the incarnation of the Redeemer. Now in this respect, it will be observed that God stands connected with us in relation to the soul as "the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Once more: there is a nearer, a closer, and a more enduring relation in which God stands to us—that is, the relation of the Spirit. It is to the writings of St. John that we have to turn especially, if we desire to know the doctrines of the Spirit. You will remember the strange way in which he speaks of God. It would almost seem as if the external God has disappeared to him; nay, as if an external Christ were almost forgotten, because the internal Christ has been formed. He speaks of God as kindred with us; he speaks of Christ as Christ *in* us; and "if we love one another," he says, "God dwelleth in us." If a man keep the commandments, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God." So that the spiritual manifestation of God to us is that whereby He blends Himself with the soul of man.

These, then, my Christian brethren, are the three consciousnesses by which He becomes known to us. Three, we said, *known* to us. We do not dare to limit God; we do not presume to say that there are in God only three personalities, only three consciousnesses: all that we dare presume to say is this, that there are three in reference to us, and only three; that a fourth there is not; that, perchance, in the present state a fourth you can not add to these—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier.

Lastly, let us turn to the relation which the Trinity in unity bears to the triad in discord. It is intended for the entireness of our sanctification: "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." Brethren, we dwell upon that expression "*wholly*." There is this difference between Christianity and every other system: Christianity proposes to ennoble the whole man; every other system subordinates parts to parts. Christianity does not despise the intellect, but it does not exalt the intellect in a one-sided way: it only dwells with emphasis on the third and highest part of man—his spiritual affections; and these it maintains are the chief and real seat of everlasting life, intended to subordinate the other to themselves.

Asceticism would crush the natural affections, destroy the appetites. Asceticism feels that there is a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and it would put an end to that conflict; it would bring back unity by the excision of all our natural appetites, and all the desires and feelings which we have by nature. But when the Apostle Paul comes forward to proclaim the will of God, he says it is not by the crushing of the body but by the sanctification of the body: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this, my Christian brethren, there is one of the deepest of all truths. Does a man feel himself the slave and the victim of his lower passions? Let not that man hope to subdue them merely by struggling against them. Let him not by fasting, by austerity, by any earthly rule that he can conceive, expect to subdue the flesh. The more he thinks of his vile and lower feelings, the more will they be brought into distinctness, and therefore into power; the more hopelessly will he become their victim. The only way in which a man can subdue the flesh is not by the extinction of those feelings, but by the elevation of their character. Let there be added to that character, sublimity of aim, purity of affection; let there be given grandeur, spiritual nobleness; and then, just as the strengthening of the whole constitution of the body makes any particular and local affection disappear, so by degrees, by the raising of the character, do these lower affections become, not extinguished or destroyed by excision, but ennobled by a new and loftier spirit breathed through them.

This is the account given by the apostle. He speaks of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. And his remedy is to give vigor to the higher, rather than to struggle with the lower. "This I say, then, Walk in the spirit, and ye *shall not* fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Once more: the apostle differs from the world in this, that the world would restore this unity and sanctify man simply from the soul. It is this which civilization pretends to effect. We hear much in these modern days of "the progress of humanity." We hear of man's invention, of man's increase of knowledge; and it would seem in all this, as if man were necessarily becoming better. Brethren, it always must be the case in that state in which God is looked upon as the Supreme Being merely, where the intellect of man is supposed to be the chief thing—that which makes him most kindred to his Maker.

The doctrine of Christianity is this—that unity of all this discord must be made. Man is to be made one with God, not by soaring intellect, but by lowly love. It is the Spirit which guides him to all truth; not merely by rendering more acute the reasoning powers, but by convincing of sin, by humbling the man. It is the graces of the Spirit which harmonize the man, and make him one; and that is the end, and aim, and object of all the Gospel: the entireness of sanctification to produce a perfectly developed man.

Most of us in this world are monsters, with some part of our being bearing the development of a giant and others showing the proportions of a dwarf: a feeble, dwarfish will—mighty, full-blown passions; and therefore it is that there is to be visible through the Trinity in us, a noble manifold unity; and when the triune power of God shall so have done its work on the entireness of our humanity, that the body, soul, and spirit have been sanctified, then shall there be exhibited, and only then, a perfect affection in man to his Maker, and body, soul, and spirit shall exhibit a Trinity in unity.

V.

ABSOLUTION.

"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"—Luke v. 21.

There are questions which having been again and again settled, still from time to time present themselves for *re*-solution; errors which having been refuted, and cut up by the roots, re-appear in the next century as fresh and vigorous as ever. Like the fabled monsters of old, from whose dissevered neck the blood sprung forth and formed fresh heads, multiplied and indestructible; or like the weeds, which, extirpated in one place, sprout forth vigorously in another.

In every such case it may be taken for granted that the root of the matter has not been reached; the error has been exposed, but the truth which lay at the bottom of the error has not been disengaged. Every error is connected with a truth; the truth being perennial, springs up again as often as circumstances foster it, or call for it, and the seeds of error which lay about the roots spring up again in the form of weeds, as before.

A popular illustration of this may be found in the belief in the appearance of the spirits of the departed. You may examine the evidence for every such alleged apparition; you may demonstrate the improbability; you may reduce it to an impossibility; still the popular feeling will remain; and there is a lurking superstition even among the enlightened, which in the midst of professions of incredulity shows itself in a readiness to believe the wildest new tale, if it possess but the semblance of an authentication. Now two truths lie at the root of this superstition. The first is the reality of the spirit-world and the instinctive belief in it. The second is the fact that there are certain states of health in which the eye creates the objects which it perceives. The death-blow to such superstition is only struck when we have not only proved that men have been deceived, but shown besides how they came to be deceived; when science has explained the optical delusion, and shown the physiological state in which such apparitions become visible. Ridicule will not do it. Disproof will not do it. So long as men feel that there is a spirit-world, and so long as to some the impression is vivid that they have seen it, you spend your rhetoric in vain. You must show the truth that lies below the error.

The principle we gain from this is, that you can not overthrow falsehood by negation, but by establishing the antagonistic truth. The refutation which is to last must be positive, not negative. It is an endless work to be uprooting weeds: plant the ground with wholesome vegetation, and then the juices which would have otherwise fed rankness will pour themselves into a more vigorous growth; the dwindled weeds will be easily raked out then. It is an endless task to be refuting error. Plant truth, and the error will pine away.

The instance to which all this is preliminary, is the pertinacious hold which the belief in a human absolving power retains upon mankind. There has perhaps never yet been known a religion without such a belief. There is not a savage in the islands of the South Pacific who does not believe that his priest can shield him from the consequences of sin. There was not a people in antiquity who had not dispensers of Divine favor. That same belief passed from Paganism into Romanism. It was exposed at the period of the Reformation. A mighty reaction was felt against it throughout Europe. Apparently the whole idea of human priesthood was proved, once and forever, to be baseless; human mediation, in every possible form, was vehemently controverted; men were referred back to God as the sole Absolver.

Yet now again, three centuries after, the belief is still as strong as ever. That which we thought dead is alive again, and not likely, it seems, to die. Recent revelations have shown that confession is daily made in the country whose natural manners are most against it; private absolution asked by English men and given by English priests. A fact so significant might lead us well to pause, and ask ourselves whether we have found the true answer to the question. The negation we have got, the vehement denial; we are weary of its reiteration: but the positive truth which lies at the bottom of this craving—where is that?

Parliaments and pulpits, senators and clergymen, have vied with each other in the vehemence with which they declare absolution un-Christian, un-English. All that is most abominable in the confessional has been with unsparing and irreverent indelicacy forced before the public mind. Still, men and women, whose holiness and purity are beyond slander's reach, come and crave assurance of forgiveness. How shall we reply to such men? Shall we say, "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins, but God only?" Shall we say it is all blasphemy; an impious intrusion upon the prerogatives of the One Absolver? Well, we may; it is *popular* to say we ought; but you will observe, if we speak so, we do no more than the Pharisees in this text: we establish a negation; but a negation is only one side of truth.

Moreover, we have been asserting that for three hundred years, with small fruits. We keep asserting, Man can not give assurance that sin is pardoned; in other words, man can not absolve: but still the heart craves human assurance of forgiveness. What truth have we got to supply that craving? We shall therefore rather try to fathom the deeps of the positive truth which is the true reply to the error; we shall try to see whether there is not a real answer to the craving contained in the Redeemer's words, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." What power is there in human forgiveness? What does absolution mean in the lips of a son of man? These are our questions for today. We shall consider two points.

I. The impotency of the negation.
II. The power of the positive truth.

The Pharisees denied the efficacy of human absolution: they said, "None can forgive sins, but God only:" that was a negation. What did they effect by their system of negations? They conferred no peace; they produced no holiness. It would be a great error to suppose that the Pharisees were hypocrites in the ordinary sense of the term—that is, pretending to be anxious about religion when they knew that they felt no anxiety. They *were* anxious, in their way. They heard a startling free announcement of forgiveness by a man. To them it appeared license given to sin. If this new teacher, this upstart—in their own language, "this fellow—of whom every man knew whence he was," were to go about the length and breadth of the land, telling sinners to be at peace; telling them to forget the past, and to work onwards; bidding men's consciences be at rest; and commanding them not to *fear* the God whom they had offended, but to *trust* in Him—what would become of morality and religion? This presumptuous Absolver would make men careless about both. If the indispensable safeguards of penalty were removed, what remained to restrain men from sin?

For the Pharisees had no notion of any other goodness than that which is restrained; they could conceive no goodness free, but only that which is produced by rewards and punishments—law-goodness, law-righteousness: to dread God, not to love and trust Him, was their conception of religion. And this, indeed, is the *ordinary* conception of religion—the ordinary meaning implied to most minds by the word religion. The word religion means, by derivation, restriction or obligation—obligation to do, obligation to avoid. And this is the negative system of the Pharisees—scrupulous avoidance of evil rather than positive and free pursuit of excellence. Such a system never produced any thing but barren denial. "*This* is wrong;" "*that* is heresy;" "*that* is dangerous."

There was another class of men who denied human power of absolution. They were called Scribes or writers—pedants, men of ponderous learning and accurate definitions; from being mere transcribers of the law, they had risen to be its expounders. They could define the exact number of yards that might be travelled on the sabbath-day without infringement of the law; they could decide, according to the most approved theology, the respective importance of each duty; they would tell you, authoritatively, which was the *great* commandment of the law. The Scribe is a man who turns religion into etiquette: his idea of God is that of a monarch, transgression against whom is an offense against statute law, and he, the Scribe, is there to explain the prescribed conditions upon which the offense may be expiated; he has no idea of admission to the sovereign's presence, except by compliance with certain formalities which the Scribe is commissioned to declare.

There are therefore Scribes in all ages—Romish Scribes, who distinguish between venial and mortal sin, and apportion to each its appointed penance and absolution. There are Protestant Scribes, who have no idea of God but as an incensed judge, and prescribe certain methods of appeasing Him—a certain price, in consideration of which He is willing to sell forgiveness; men who accurately draw the distinction between the different kinds of faith—faith historical and faith saving; who bewilder and confuse all natural feeling; who treat the natural love of relations as if it were an idolatry as great as bowing down to mammon; who make intelligible distinction between the work that *may* and the work that may *not* be done on the sabbath-day; who send you into a perilous consideration of the workings of your own feelings, and the examination of your spiritual experiences, to ascertain whether you have the feelings which give you a right to call God a Father. They hate the Romish Scribe as much as the Jewish Scribe hated the Samaritan and called him heretic. But in their way they are true to the spirit of the Scribe.

Now the result of this is fourfold. Among the tender-minded, despondency; among the vainer, spiritual pride; in the case of the slavish, superstition; with the hard-minded, infidelity. Ponder it well, and you will find these four things rife amongst us: despondency, spiritual pride, superstition, and infidelity. In this way we have been going on for many years. In the midst of all this, at last we are informed that the confessional is at work again; whereupon astonishment and indignation are loudly expressed. It is not to be borne that the priests of the Church of England should confess and absolve in private. Yet it is only what might have been expected.

With our Evangelicalism, Tractarianism, Scribeism, Pharisaism, we have ceased to front the *living fact*—we are as zealous as Scribes and Pharisees ever were for negatives; but in the mean time human nature, oppressed and overborne, gasping for breath, demands something real and living. It can not live on controversies. It can not be fed on protests against heresy, however vehement. We are trying who can protest loudest. Every book, every journal, rings with warnings. "Beware!" is written upon every thing. Beware of Rome; beware of Geneva; beware of Germany; some danger on every side; Satan everywhere—God *nowhere;* everywhere some man to be shunned or dreaded—nowhere one to be loved freely and without suspicion. Is it any wonder if men and women, in the midst of negations, cry, "Ye warn me from the error, but who will guide me into truth? I want guidance. I am sinful, full of evil! I want forgiveness. Absolve me; tell me that I am pardoned; help me to believe it. Your quarrels do not help me; if you can not do *that*, it matters little what you *can* do. You have restricted God's love, and narrowed the path to heaven; you have hampered religion with so many mysterious questions and quibbles that I can not find the way to God; you have terrified me with so many snares and pitfalls on every side, that I dare not tread at all. Give me peace; give me human guidance: I want a human arm to lean on."

This is a cry, I believe, becoming daily more passionate and more common. And no wonder that all our information, public and private, is to the same effect—that the recent converts have found peace in Rome; for the secret of the power of Rome is this—that she grounds her teaching, not on variable feelings and correct opinions, but on *facts.* God is not a highly probable God, but a *fact.* God's forgiveness is not a feeling, but a *fact;* and a material symbolic fact is the witness of the invisible one. Rome puts forward her absolution—her false, priestly, magical absolution—a visible fact, as a witness of the invisible. And her perversion prevails because founded on a truth.

II. The power of the positive truth.

Is it any wonder, if, taught on every side distrust of man, the heart should by a violent reaction, and by an extravagant confidence in a priest, proclaim that its normal, natural state is not distrust, but trust?

What is forgiveness? It is God reconciled to us. What is absolution? It is the authoritative declaration that God is reconciled. Authoritative: that is a real power of conveying a sense and feeling of forgiveness. It is the power of the Son of Man *on earth* to forgive sins. It is man, God's image, representing, by his forgiveness on earth, God's forgiveness in heaven.

Now distinguish God's forgiveness of sin from an arresting of the consequence of sin. When God forgives a sin it does not follow that He stops its consequences: for example, when He forgives the intemperate man whose health is ruined, forgiveness does not restore his health. Divine pardon does not interfere with the laws of the universe, for it is itself one of those laws. It is a law that penalty follows transgression. Forgiveness will not save from penalty; but it alters the feelings with which the penalty is accepted. Pain inflicted with a surgeon's knife for a man's good is as keen as that which results from the knife of the torturer; but in the one case it is calmly borne because remedial—in the other it exasperates because it is felt to be intended by malevolence. So with the difference between suffering which comes from a sin which we hope God has forgiven, and suffering which seems to fall hot from the hand of an angry God. It is a fearful truth, that, so far as we know at least, the consequences of an act are connected with it indissolubly. Forgiveness does not arrest them; but by producing softness and grateful penitence, it transforms them into blessings. This is God's forgiveness; and absolution is the conveyance to the conscience of the conviction of forgiveness: to absolve is to free—to comfort by strengthening—to afford repose from fear.

Now it was the way of the Redeemer to emancipate from sin by the freeness of absolution. The dying thief, an hour before a blasphemer, was unconditionally assured; the moment the sinner's feelings changed towards God, He proclaimed that God was reconciled to him: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And hence, speaking humanly, hence, from this absolving tone and spirit, came His wondrous and unparalleled power with sinful, erring hearts; hence the life and fresh impulse which He imparted to the being and experience to those with whom He dealt. Hence the maniac, freed from the legion, sat at His feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Hence the outcast woman, whom human scorn would have hardened into brazen effrontery, hearing an unwonted voice of human sympathy, "washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."

And this is what we have forgotten: we have not yet learned to trust the power of redeeming love; we do not believe in the omnipotence of grace, and the might of an appeal to the better parts, and not the slavish parts of human nature. Settle it in your minds, the absolving power is the central secret of the Gospel. Salvation is unconditional; not an offer, but *a gift;* not clogged with conditions, but free as the air we breathe. God welcomes back the prodigal. God loves without money and without price. To this men reply gravely, It is dangerous to speak thus; it is perilous to dispense with the safeguards of restriction. Law! law! there is nothing like law—a salutary fear—for making men holy. Oh blind Pharisee! had you ever known the spring, the life which comes from feeling *free*, the gush of gratitude with which the heart springs to duty when all chains are shattered, and it stands fearless and free in the light, and in the love of God—you would understand that a large trusting charity, which can throw itself on the better and more generous impulses of a laden spirit, is the safest as well as the most beautiful means of securing obedience.

So far, however, there will not be much objection to the doctrine: it will be admitted that absolution is true in the lips of Christ, because of His Divinity. It will be said He was God, and God speaking on earth is the same thing as God speaking in heaven. No, my brethren, it is *not* the same thing. Christ forgiving on earth is *a new truth* added to that of God's forgiving in heaven. It is not the same truth. The one is forgiveness by Deity; the other is the declaration of forgiveness by humanity. He bade the palsied man walk, that they might know that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Therefore we proceed a step farther. The same power He delegated to His Church which He had exercised Himself. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." Now perhaps it will be replied to this, that that promise belongs to the apostles; that they were supernaturally gifted to distinguish genuine from feigned repentance; to absolve, therefore, was their natural prerogative, but that we have no right to say it extends beyond the apostles.

We therefore bring the question to a point by referring to an instance in which an apostle did absolve. Let us examine whether St. Paul confined the prerogative to himself. "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for to whom I forgave any thing for your sakes, forgave I it in the person of Christ."

Observe now: it is quite true here that the apostle absolved a man whose excommunication he had formerly required: but he absolved him because the congregation absolved him; not as a plenipotentiary supernaturally gifted to convey a mysterious benefit, but as himself an organ and representative of the Church. The power of absolution therefore belonged to the Church, and to the apostle through the Church. It was a power belonging to *all* Christians: to the apostle, because he was a Christian, not because he was an apostle. A priestly power, no doubt, because Christ has made all Christians kings and priests.

Now let us turn again, with this added light, to examine the meaning of that expression, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Mark that form of words—not Christ as God, but Christ as Son of Man. It was manifestly said by Him, not solely as Divine, but rather as human, as the Son of Man; that is, as man. For we may take it as a rule: when Christ calls himself Son of Man, He is asserting His humanity. It was said by the High-Priest of humanity in the name of the race. It was said on the principle that human nature is the reflection of God's nature: that human love is the image of God's love; and that human forgiveness is the type and assurance of Divine forgiveness.

In Christ humanity was the perfect type of Deity, and therefore Christ's absolution was always the exact measure and counterpart of God's forgiveness. Herein lies the deep truth of the doctrine of His eternal priesthood—the Eternal Son—the humanity of the being of God—the ever-human mind of God. The Absolver ever lives. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son—hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man.

But further than this. In a subordinate, because less perfect degree, the forgiveness of a man as man carries with it an absolving power. Who has not felt the load taken from his mind when the hidden guilt over which he had brooded long has been acknowledged, and met by forgiving human sympathy, especially at a time when he expected to be treated with coldness and reproof? Who has not felt how such a moment was to him the dawn of a better hope, and how the merciful judgment of some wise and good human being seemed to be the type and the assurance of God's pardon, making it credible. Unconsciously, it may be, but still in substance really, I believe some such reasoning as *this* goes on in the whispers of the heart—"He loves me, and has compassion on me—will not God forgive? He, this man, made in God's image, does not think my case hopeless. Well, then, in the larger love of God it is not hopeless." Thus, and only thus, can we understand the *ecclesiastical* act. Absolution, the prerogative of our humanity, is represented by a formal act of the Church.

Much controversy and angry bitterness has been spent on the absolution put by the Church of England into the lips of her ministers—I can not think with justice—if we try to get at the root of these words of Christ. The priest proclaims forgiveness authoritatively as the organ of the congregation—as the voice of the Church, in the name of man and God. For human nature represents God. The Church represents what human nature is and ought to be. The minister represents the Church. He speaks therefore in the name of our Godlike human nature. He declares a Divine fact; he does not create it. There is no magic in his absolution: he can no more forgive whom God has not forgiven, by the formula of absolution, or reverse the pardon of him whom God has absolved by a formula of excommunication, than he can transfer a demon into an angel by the formula of baptism. He declares what every one has a right to declare, and ought to declare by his lips and by his conduct: but being a minister, he declares it authoritatively in the name of every Christian who by his Christianity is a priest to God; he specializes what is universal; as in baptism, he seals the universal Sonship on the individual by name, saying, "The Sonship with which Christ has redeemed all men, I hereby proclaim for this child;" so by absolution he specializes the universal fact of the love of God to those who are listening then and there, saying, "The love of God the Absolver I authoritatively proclaim to be *yours*."

In the service for the visitation of the sick, the Church of England puts into the lips of her ministers words quite unconditional: "I absolve thee from all thy sins." You know that passage is constantly objected to as Romish and superstitious. I would not give up that precious passage. I love the Church of England, because she has dared to claim her inheritance—because she has courage to assert herself as what she ought to be—God's representative on earth. She says to her minister, Stand there before a darkened spirit, on whom the shadows of death have begun to fall: in human flesh and blood representing the Invisible—with words of human love making credible the love eternal. Say boldly, I am here to declare not a perhaps, *but a fact.* I forgive thee in the name of humanity. And so far as humanity represents Deity, that forgiveness is a type of God's. She does not put into her ministers' lips words of incantation. He can not bless whom God has not blessed—he can not curse whom God has not cursed. If the Son of Absolution be there, his absolution will rest. If you have ever tried the slow and apparently hopeless task of ministering to a heart diseased, and binding up the wound that *will* bleed afresh, to which no assurances can give comfort, because they are not authoritative, it must have crossed your mind that such a power as that which the Church of England claims, if it were believed, is exactly the remedy you want. You must have felt that even the formula of the Church of Rome would be a blessed power to exercise, could it but once be accepted as a pledge that all the past was obliterated, and that from that moment a free untainted future lay before the soul—you must have *felt* that; you must have wished you had dared to *say* it. My whole spirit has absolved my erring brother. Is God less merciful than I? Can I—dare I—say or think it conditionally? Dare I say, I hope? May I not, must I not, say, *I know* God has forgiven you?

Every man whose heart has truly bled over another's sin, and watched another's remorse with pangs as sharp as if the crime had been his own, *has* said it. Every parent has said it who ever received back a repentant daughter, and opened out for her a new hope for life. Every mother has said it who ever, by her hope against hope for some profligate, protested for a love deeper and wider than that of society. Every man has said it who forgave a deep wrong. See, then, *why* and *how* the Church absolves. She only exercises tha power which belongs to every son of man. If society were Christian—if society, by its forgiveness and its exclusion, truly represented the mind of God—there would be no necessity for a Church to speak; but the absolution of society and the world does not represent by any means God's forgiveness. Society absolves those whom God has *not* absolved—the proud, the selfish, the strong, the seducer; society refuses return and acceptance to the seduced, the frail, and the sad penitent whom God has accepted; therefore it is necessary that a selected body, through its appointed organs, should do in the name of man what man, as such, does not. The Church is the ideal of humanity. It represents what God intended man to be—what man is in God's sight as beheld in Christ by Him; and the minister of the Church speaks as the representative of that ideal humanity. Church absolution is an eternal protest, in the name of God the Absolver, against the false judgments of society.

One thing more: beware of making this a dead formula. If absolution be not a living truth it becomes a monstrous falsehood; if you take absolution as a mystical gift conveyed to an individual man called a priest, and mysteriously efficacious in *his* lips, and his *alone*, you petrify a truth into death and unreality. I have been striving to show that absolution is not a Church figment, invented by priestcraft, but a living, blessed, human power. It is a power delegated to you and to me, and just so far as we exercise it lovingly and wisely, in our lives, and with our lips, we help men away from sin: just so far as we do not exercise it, or exercise it falsely, we drive men to Rome. For if the heart can not have a truth it will take a counterfeit of truth. By every magnanimous act, by every free forgiveness with which a pure man forgives, or pleads for mercy, or assures the penitent, he proclaims this truth, that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins"—he exhibits the priestly power of humanity —*he does* absolve; let theology say what it will of absolution, he gives peace to the conscience—he is a type and assurance of what God is—he breaks the chains and lets the captive go free.

VI.

THE ILLUSIVENESS OF LIFE.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—Heb. xi. 8–10.

Last Sunday we touched upon a thought which deserves further development. God promised Canaan to Abraham, and yet Abraham never inherited Canaan: to the last he was a wanderer there; he had no possession of his own in its territory; if he wanted even a tomb to bury his dead, he could only obtain it by purchase. This difficulty is expressly admitted in the text, "In the land of promise he sojourned as in a strange country;" he dwelt there in tents—in changeful, movable tabernacles—not permanent habitations; he had no home there.

It is stated in all its startling force, in terms still more explicit, in the 7th chapter of the Acts, 5th verse, "And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child."

Now the surprising point is that Abraham, deceived, as you might almost say, did not complain of it as a deception; he was even grateful for the non-fulfillment of the promise: he does not seem to have expected its fulfillment; he did not look for Canaan, but for "a city which had foundations;" his faith appears to have consisted in disbelieving the letter, almost as much as in believing the spirit of the promise.

And herein lies a principle, which, rightly expounded, can help us to interpret this life of ours. God's promises never are fulfilled in the sense in which they seem to have been given. Life is a deception; its anticipations, which are God's promises to the imagination, are never realized; they who know life best, and have trusted God most to fill it with blessings, are ever the first to say that life is a series of disappointments. And in the spirit of this text we have to say that it is a wise and merciful arrangement which ordains it thus.

The wise and holy do not expect to find it otherwise—would not wish it otherwise; their wisdom consists in disbelieving its promises. To develop this idea would be a glorious task; for to justify God's ways to man, to expound the mysteriousness of our present being, to interpret God—is not this the very essence of the ministerial office? All that I can hope, however, to-day, is not to exhaust the subject but to furnish hints for thought. Over-statements may be made, illustrations may be inadequate, the new ground of an almost untrodden subject may be torn up too rudely; but remember, we are here to live and die; in a few years it will be all over; meanwhile, what we have to do is to try to understand, and to help one another to understand, what it all means—what this strange and contradictory thing, which we call life, contains within it. Do not stop to ask, therefore, whether the subject was satisfactorily worked out; let each man be satisfied to have received a germ of thought which he may develop better for himself.

I. The deception of life's promise.
II. The meaning of that deception.

Let it be clearly understood, in the first place, the promise never was fulfilled. I do not say the fulfillment was delayed. I say it *never* was fulfilled. Abraham had a few feet of earth, obtained by purchase—beyond that nothing; he died a stranger and a pilgrim in the land. Isaac had a little. So small was Jacob's hold upon his country that the last years of his life were spent in Egypt, and he died a foreigner in a strange land. His descendants came into the land of Canaan, expecting to find it a land flowing with milk and honey; they found hard work to do—war and unrest, instead of rest and peace.

During one brief period, in the history of Israel, the promise may seem to have been fulfilled. It was during the later years of David and the earlier years of Solomon; but we have the warrant of Scripture itself for affirming, that even then the promise was not fulfilled. In the Book of Psalms, David speaks of a hope of entering into a *future* rest. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoting this passage, infers from it that God's promise had not been exhausted nor fulfilled by the entrance into Canaan; for he says, "If Joshua had given them rest, then would he not have spoken of another day." Again, in this very chapter, after a long list of Hebrew saints—"These *all* died in faith, not having received the promises." To none therefore had the promise been fulfilled. Accordingly writers on prophecy, in order to get over this difficulty, take for granted that there must be a future fulfillment, because the first was inadequate.

They who believe that the Jews will be restored to their native land, expect it on the express ground that Canaan has never been actually and permanently theirs. A certain tract of country—three hundred miles in length, by two hundred in breadth—must be given, or else they think the promise has been broken. To quote the expression of one of the most eloquent of their writers, "If there be nothing yet future for Israel, then the magnificence of the promise has been lost in the poverty of its accomplishment."

I do not quote this to prove the correctness of the interpretation of the prophecy, but as an acknowledgment which may be taken so far as a proof that the promise made to Abraham has never been accomplished.

And such is life's disappointment. Its promise is, you shall have a Canaan; it turns out to be a baseless airy dream—toil and warfare—nothing that we can call our own; not the land of rest by any means. But we will examine this in particulars.

1. Our senses deceive us; we begin life with delusion. Our senses deceive us with respect to distance, shape, and color. That which afar off seems oval turns out to be circular, modified by the perspective of distance; that which appears a speck, upon nearer approach becomes a vast body. To the earlier ages the stars presented the delusion of small lamps hung in space. The beautiful berry proves to be bitter and poisonous: that which apparently moves is really at rest: that which seems to be stationary is in perpetual motion: the earth moves: the sun is still. All experience is a correction of life's delusions—a modification, a reversal of the judgment of the senses: and all life is a lesson on the falsehood of appearances.

2. Our natural anticipations deceive us—I say *natural* in contradistinction to extravagant expectations. Every human life is a fresh one, bright with hopes that will never be realized. There may be differences of character in these hopes; finer spirits may look on life as the arena of successful deeds, the more selfish as a place of personal enjoyment.

With man the turning-point of life may be a profession—with woman, marriage; the one gilding the future with the triumphs of intellect, the other with the dreams of affection; but in every case, life is not what any of them expects, but something else. It would almost seem a satire on existence to compare the youth in the outset of his career, flushed and sanguine, with the aspect of the same being when it is near ly done—worn, sobered, covered with the dust of life, and confessing that its days have been few and evil. Where is the land flowing with milk and honey?

With our affections it is still worse, because they promise more. Man's affections are but the tabernacles of Canaan—the tents of a night; not permanent habitations even for this life. Where are the charms of character, the perfection, and the purity, and the truthfulness, which seemed so resplendent in our friend? They were only the shape of our own conceptions—our creative shaping intellect projected its own fantasies on him: and hence we outgrow our early friendships; outgrow the intensity of all: we dwell in tents; we never find a home, even in the land of promise. Life is an unenjoyable Canaan, with nothing real or substantial in it.

3. Our expectations, resting on revelation, deceive us. The world's history has turned round two points of hope; one, the *first*—the other, the *second* coming of the Messiah. The magnificent imagery of Hebrew prophecy had described the advent of the Conqueror; He came—"a root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness: and when they saw Him there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him." The victory, predicted in such glowing terms, turned out to be the victory of submission—the law of our humanity, which wins by gentleness and love. The promise in the letter was unfulfilled. For ages the world's hope has been the second advent. The early church expected it in their own day. "We, which are alive, and remain until the coming of our Lord."

The Saviour Himself had said, "This generation shall not pass till all things be fulfilled." Yet the Son of Man has never come; or rather, He has been *ever* coming. Unnumbered times the judgment-eagles have gathered together over corruption ripe for condemnation. Times innumerable the separation has been made between good and bad. The promise has not been fulfilled, or it has been fulfilled, but in either case anticipation has been foiled and disappointed.

There are two ways of considering this aspect of life. One is the way of sentiment; the other is the way of faith. The sentimental way is trite enough. Saint, sage, sophist, moralist, and preacher, have repeated in every possible image, till there is nothing new to say, that life is a bubble, a dream, a delusion, a phantasm. The other is the way of faith: the ancient saints felt as keenly as any moralist could feel the brokenness of its promises; they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims here; they said that they had here no continuing city; but they did not mournfully moralize on this; they said it cheerfully, and rejoiced that it was so. They felt that all was right; they knew that the promise itself had a deeper meaning: they looked undauntedly for "a city which hath foundations."

II. The second inquiry, therefore, is the meaning of this delusiveness.

1. It serves to allure us on. Suppose that a spiritual promise had been made at first to Israel; imagine that they had been informed at the outset that God's rest is inward; that the promised land is only found in the Jerusalem which is above—not material, but immaterial. That rude, gross people, yearning after the fleshpots of Egypt—willing to go back into slavery, so as only they might have enough to eat and drink—would they have quitted Egypt on such terms? Would they have begun one single step of that pilgrimage which was to find its meaning in the discipline of ages?

We are led through life as we are allured upon a journey. Could a man see his route before him—a flat, straight road, unbroken by bush, or tree, or eminence, with the sun's heat burning down upon it, stretched out in dreary monotony—he could scarcely find energy to begin his task; but the uncertainty of what may be seen beyond the next turn keeps expectation alive. The view that may be seen from yonder summit—the glimpse that may be caught, perhaps, as the road winds round yonder knoll—hopes like these, not far distant, beguile the traveller on from mile to mile, and from league to league.

In fact, life is an education. The object for which you educate your son is to give him strength of purpose, self-command, discipline of mental energies; but you do not reveal to your son this aim of his education; you tell him of his place in his class, of the prizes at the end of the year, of the honors to be given at college.

These are not the true incentives to knowledge; such incentives are not the highest—they are even mean, and partially injurious; yet these mean incentives stimulate and lead on, from day to day and from year to year, by a process the principle of which the boy himself is not aware of. So does God lead on, through life's unsatisfying and false reward, ever educating: Canaan first; then the hope of a Redeemer; then the millennial glory.

Now what is remarkable in this is, that the delusion continued to the last; they *all* died in faith, not having received the promises; all were hoping up to the very last, and all died in faith, not in realization; for thus God has constituted the human heart. It never will be believed that this world is unreal. God has mercifully so arranged it, that the idea of delusion is incredible. You may tell the boy or girl as you will that life is a disappointment; yet however you may persuade them to adopt your *tone*, and catch the language of your sentiment, they are both looking forward to some bright distant hope—the rapture of the next vacation, or the unknown joys of the next season—and throwing into it an energy of expectation which only a whole eternity is worth. You may tell the man who has received the heart-shock from which in this world he will not recover, that life has nothing left; yet the stubborn heart still hopes on, ever near the prize—"wealthiest when most undone:" he has reaped the whirlwind, but he will go on still, till life is over, sowing the wind.

Now observe the beautiful result which comes from this indestructible power of believing in spite of failure. In the first centuries, the early Christians believed that the millennial advent was close; they heard the warning of the apostle, brief and sharp, "The time is short." Now suppose that, instead of this, they had seen all the dreary page of Church history unrolled; suppose that they had known that after two thousand years the world would have scarcely spelled out three letters of the meaning of Christianity, where would have been those gigantic efforts, that life spent as on the very brink of eternity, which characterize the days of the early Church, and which was, after all, only the true life of man in time? It is thus that God has led on His world. He has conducted it as a father leads his child, when the path homeward lies over many a dreary league. He suffers him to beguile the thought of time, by turning aside to pluck now and then a flower, to chase now a butterfly; the butterfly is crushed, the flower fades, but the child is so much nearer home, invigorated and full of health, and scarcely wearied yet.

2. This non-fulfillment of promise fulfills it in a *deeper* way. The account we have given already, were it to end there, would be insufficient to excuse the failure of life's promise; by saying that it allures us would be really to charge God with deception. Now life is not deception, but illusion. We distinguish between illusion and delusion. We may paint wood so as to be taken for stone, iron, or marble; this is delusion: but you may paint a picture, in which rocks, trees, and sky are never mistaken for what they seem, yet produce all the emotion which real rocks, trees, and sky would produce. This is illusion, and this

is the painter's art: never for one moment to deceive by attempted imitation, but to produce a mental state in which the feelings are suggested which the natural objects themselves would create. Let us take an instance drawn from life.

To a child a rainbow is a real thing—substantial and palpable; its limb rests on the side of yonder hill; he believes that he can appropriate it to himself; and when, instead of gems and gold hid in its radiant bow, he finds nothing but damp mist, cold, dreary drops of disappointment—that disappointment tells that his belief has been delusion.

To the educated man that bow is a blessed illusion, yet it never once deceives; he does not take it for what it is not; he does not expect to make it his own; he feels its beauty as much as the child could feel it, nay infinitely more—more even from the fact that he knows that it will be transient; but besides and beyond this, to him it presents a deeper loveliness; he knows the laws of light, and the laws of the human soul which gave it being. He has linked it with the laws of the universe, and with the invisible mind of God; and it brings to him a thrill of awe, and the sense of a mysterious, nameless beauty, of which the child did not conceive. It is illusion still; but it has fulfilled the promise. In the realm of spirit, in the temple of the soul, it is the same. All is illusion; "but we look for a city which hath foundations;" and in this the promise is fulfilled.

And such was Canaan to the Israelites. To some, doubtless, it was delusion. They expected to find their reward in a land of milk and honey. They were bitterly disappointed, and expressed their disappointment loudly enough in their murmurs against Moses, and their rebellion against his successors. But to others, as to Abraham, Canaan was the bright illusion which never deceived, but forever shone before as the type of something more real. And even taking the promise literally, though they built in tents, and could not call a foot of land their own, was not its beauty theirs? Were not its trellised vines, and glorious pastures, and rich olive-fields, ministers to the enjoyment of those who had all in God, though its milk, and oil, and honey, could not be enjoyed with exclusiveness of appropriation? Yet over and above and beyond this, there was a more blessed fulfillment of the promise; there was "a city which had foundations" —built and made by God—towards which the anticipation of this Canaan was leading them. The kingdom of God was forming in their souls, forever disappointing them by the unreal, and teaching them that what is spiritual, and belongs to mind and character, alone can be eternal.

We will illustrate this principle from the common walks of life. The principle is, that the reward we get is not the reward for which we worked, but a deeper one; deeper and more permanent. The merchant labors all his life, and the hope which leads him on is perhaps wealth: well, at sixty years of age he attains wealth; is that the reward of sixty years of toil? Ten years of enjoyment, when the senses can enjoy no longer—a country-seat, splendid plate, a noble establishment? Oh, no! a reward deeper than he dreamed of—habits of perseverance: a character trained by industry: that is his reward. He was carried on from year to year by, if he were wise, illusion; if he were unwise, delusion; but he reaped a more enduring substance in himself.

Take another instance: the public man, warrior, or statesman, who has served his country, and complains at last, in bitter disappointment, that his country has not fulfilled his expectations in rewarding him—that is, it has not given him titles, honors, wealth. But titles, honors, wealth—are these the rewards of well-doing? can they reward it? would it be well-doing if they could? To *be* such a man, to have the power of *doing* such deeds, what could be added to that reward by having? This same apparent contradiction, which was found in Judaism, subsists too in Christianity; we will state it in the words of an apostle: "Godliness is profitable for all things; having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Now for the fulfillment: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then are we of all men most miserable."

Godliness is profitable; but its profit, it appears, consists in finding that all is loss: yet in this way you teach your son. You will tell him that if he will be good all men will love him. You say that "Honesty is the best policy," yet in your heart of hearts you know that you are leading him on by a delusion. Christ was good. Was he loved by all? In proportion as he, your son, is like Christ, he will be loved, not by the many, but by the few. Honesty is *not* the best *policy;* the commonplace honesty of the market-place may be—the vulgar honesty which goes no farther than paying debts accurately; but that transparent Christian honesty of a life which in every act is bearing witness to the truth, that is not the way to *get on* in life—the reward of such a life is the cross. Yet you were right in teaching your son this: you told him what was true; truer than he could comprehend. It *is* better to be honest and good; better than he can know or dream: better even in this life; better by so much as *being* good is better than *having* good. But, in a rude coarse way, you must express the blessedness on a level with his capacity; you must state the truth in a way which he will inevitably interpret falsely. The true interpretation nothing but experience can teach.

And this is what God does. His promises are true, though illusive; far truer than we at first take them to be. We work for a mean, low, sensual happiness, all the while He is leading us on to a spiritual blessedness, unfathomably deep. This is the life of faith. We live by faith, and not by sight. We do not preach that all is disappointment—the dreary creed of sentimentalism; but we preach that *nothing* here is disappointment, if rightly understood. We do not comfort the poor man, by saying that the riches that he has not now he will have hereafter—the difference between himself and the man of wealth being only this, that the one has for time what the other will have for eternity; but what we say is, that that which you have failed in reaping here you never will reap, if you expected the harvest of Canaan. God has no Canaan for His own; no milk and honey for the luxury of the senses: for the city which hath foundations is built in the soul of man. He in whom Godlike character dwells has all the universe for his own—"All things," saith the apostle, "are yours; whether life or death, or things present, or things to come; if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the *promise.*"

VII.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

It may be, that in reading these verses some of us have understood them in a sense foreign to that of the apostle. It may have seemed that the arguments ran thus—Because Christ died upon the cross for *all*, therefore all must have been in a state of spiritual death before; and if they were asked what doctrines are to be elicited from this passage they would reply, "the doctrine of universal depravity, and the constraining power of the gratitude due to Him who died to redeem us from it." There is, however, in the first place, this fatal objection to such an interpretation, that the death here spoken of is used in two diametrically opposite senses. In reference to Christ, death literal—in reference to all, death spiritual. Now, in the thought of St. Paul, the death of Christ was always viewed as liberation from the power of evil: "in that He died, He died unto sin once," and again, "he that is dead is free from sin." The literal death, then, in one clause, means *freedom* from sin; the spiritual death of the next is *slavery* to it. Wherein, then, lies the cogency of the apostle's reasoning? How does it follow that because Christ died to evil, all before that must have died to God? Of course that doctrine is true in itself, but it is *not* the doctrine of the text.

In the next place, the ambiguity belongs only to the English word—it is impossible to make the mistake in the original: the word which stands for *were*, is a word which does not imply a continued state, but must imply a single finished act. It can not by any possibility imply that before the death of Christ men *were* in a state of death—it can only mean, they became dead at the moment when Christ died. If you read it thus, the meaning of the English will emerge —"if one died for all, then all died;" and the apostle's argument runs thus, that if one acts as the representative of all, then his act is the act of all. If the ambassador of a nation makes reparation in a nation's name, or does homage for a nation, that reparation, or that homage, is the nation's act —if *one* did it *for* all, then *all* did it. So that instead of inferring that because Christ died for all, therefore before that all were dead to God, his natural inference is that therefore all are now dead to sin.

Once more, the conclusion of the apostle is exactly the reverse of that which this interpretation attributes to him: he does not say that Christ died in order that men might *not* die, but exactly for this very purpose, that they *might* die; and this death he represents in the next verse by an equivalent expression—the life of unselfishness: "that they which live might henceforth live not unto themselves." The "dead" of the first verse are "they that live" of the second.

The form of thought finds its exact parallel in Romans vi. 10, 11. Two points claim our attention:

I. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ.
II. The influence of that sacrifice on man.

I. The vicariousness of the sacrifice is implied in the word "for." A vicarious act is an act done for another. When the Pope calls himself the vicar of Christ, he implies that he acts for Christ. The vicar or viceroy of a kingdom is one who acts for the king—a vicar's act, therefore, is virtually the act of the principal whom he represents; so that if the Papal doctrine were true, when the vicar of Christ *pardons*, Christ has pardoned. When the viceroy of a kingdom has published a proclamation or signed a treaty, the sovereign himself is bound by those acts.

The truth of the expression *for all*, is contained in this fact, that Christ is the representative of humanity—properly speaking, the representative of human nature. This is the truth contained in the emphatic expression, "Son of Man." What Christ did *for* humanity was done by humanity, because in the name of humanity. For a truly vicarious act does not supersede the principal's duty of performance, but rather implies and acknowledges it. Take the case from which this very word of vicar has received its origin. In the old monastic times, when the revenues of a cathedral or a cure fell to the lot of a monastery, it became the duty of that monastery to perform the religious services of the cure. But inasmuch as the monastery was a corporate body, they appointed one of their number, whom they denominated their vicar, to discharge those offices for them. His service did not supersede theirs, but was a perpetual and standing acknowledgment that they, as a whole and individually, were under the obligation to perform it. The act of Christ is the act of humanity—that which all humanity is bound to do. His righteousness does not supersede our righteousness, nor does His sacrifice supersede our sacrifice. It is the representation of human life and human sacrifice—vicarious for all, yet binding upon all.

That He died for all is true—

1. Because He was the victim of the sin of all. In the peculiar phraseology of St. Paul, He died unto sin. He was the victim of sin—He died by sin. It is the appalling mystery of our redemption that the Redeemer took the attitude of subjection to evil. There was scarcely a form of evil with which Christ did not come in contact, and by which He did not suffer. He was the victim of false friendship and ingratitude, the victim of bad government and injustice. He fell a sacrifice to the vices of all classes—to the selfishness of the rich and the fickleness of the poor: intolerance, formalism, skepticism, hatred of goodness, were the foes which crushed Him.

In the proper sense of the word He was a victim. He did not adroitly wind through the dangerous forms of evil, meeting it with expedient silence. Face to face, and front to front, He met it, rebuked it, and defied it; and just as truly as he is a voluntary victim whose body, opposing the progress of the car of Juggernaut, is crushed beneath its monstrous wheels, was He a victim to the world's sin: because pure, He was crushed by impurity; because just and real and true, He waked up the rage of injustice, hypocrisy and falsehood.

Now this sin was the sin of all. Here arises at once a difficulty: it seems to be most unnatural to assert that in any one sense He was the sacrifice of the sin of all. We did not betray Him—that was Judas's act—Peter denied Him—Thomas doubted—Pilate pronounced sentence—it must be a figment to say that these were our acts; we did not watch Him like the Pharisees, nor circumvent Him like the Scribes and lawyers; by what possible sophistry can we be involved in the complicity of that guilt? The savage of New Zealand who never heard of Him, the learned Egyptian, and the voluptuous Assyrian who died before He came; how was it the sin of all?

The reply that is often given to this query is wonderfully unreal. It is assumed that Christ was conscious, by His omniscience, of the sins of all mankind; that the duplicity of the child, and the crime of the assassin, and every unholy thought that has ever passed through a human bosom, were present to His mind in that awful hour as if they were His own. This is utterly unscriptural. Where is the single text from which it can be, except by force, extracted? Besides this, it is fanciful and sentimental; and again it is dangerous, for it represents the whole Atonement as a fictitious and shadowy transaction. There is a mental state in which men have felt the burden of sins which they did not commit. There have been cases in which men have been mysteriously excruciated with the thought of having committed the unpardonable sin. But to represent the mental phenomena of the Redeemer's mind as in any way resembling this—to say that His conscience was oppressed with the responsibility of sins which He had not committed—is to confound a state of sanity with the delusions of a half lucid mind, and the workings of a healthy conscience with those of one unnatural and morbid.

There is a way, however, much more appalling and much more true, in which this may be true, without resorting to any such fanciful hypothesis. Sin has a great power in this world: it gives laws like those of a sovereign, which bind us all, and to which we are all submissive. There are current maxims in Church and State, in society, in trade, in law, to which we yield obedience. For this obedience every one is responsible; for instance, in trade, and in the profession of law, every one is the servant of practices the rectitude of which his heart can only half approve—every one complains of them, yet all are involved in them. Now, when such sins reach their climax, as in the case of national bankruptcy or an unjust acquittal, there may be some who are in a special sense the actors in the guilt; but evidently, for the bankruptcy, each member of the community is responsible in that degree and so far as he himself acquiesced in the duplicities of public dealing; every careless juror, every unrighteous judge, every false witness, has done his part in the reduction of society to that state in which the monster injustice has been perpetrated. In the riot of a tumultuous assembly by night, a house may be burnt, or a murder committed; in the eye of the law, all who are aiding and abetting there are each in his degree responsible for that crime; there may be difference in guilt, from the degree in which he is guilty who with his own hand perpetrated the deed, to that of him who merely joined the rabble from mischievous curiosity—degrees from that of willful murder to that of more or less excusable homicide.

The Pharisees were declared by the Saviour to be guilty of the blood of Zacharias, the blood of righteous Abel, and of all the saints and prophets who fell before He came. But how were the Pharisees guilty? They built the sepulchres of the prophets, they honored and admired them; but they were guilty, in that they were the children of those that slew the prophets; children in this sense, that they inherited their *spirit*, they opposed the good in the form in which it showed itself in *their day*, just as their fathers opposed the form displayed to theirs, therefore He said that they belonged to the same confederacy of evil, and that the guilt of the blood of all who had been slain should rest on that generation. Similarly we are guilty of the death of Christ. If you have been a false friend, a skeptic, a cowardly disciple, a formalist, selfish, an opposer of goodness, an oppressor, whatever evil you have done, in that degree and so far you participate in the evil to which the Just One fell a victim—you are one of that mighty rabble which cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" for your sin He died; His blood lies at your threshold.

Again, He died for all, in that His sacrifice represents the sacrifice of all. We have heard of the doctrine of "imputed righteousness;" it is a theological expression to which meanings foolish enough are sometimes attributed, but it contains a very deep truth, which it shall be our endeavor to elicit.

Christ is the realized idea of our humanity. He is God's idea of man completed. There is every difference between the ideal and the actual—between what a man aims to be and what he is; a difference between the race as it is, and the race as it existed in God's creative idea when He pronounced it very good.

In Christ, therefore, God beholds humanity; in Christ He sees perfected every one in whom Christ's spirit exists in germ. He to whom the possible is actual, to whom what will be already *is*, sees all things *present*, gazes on the imperfect, and sees it in its perfection. Let me venture an illustration. He who has never seen the vegetable world except in Arctic regions, has but a poor idea of the majesty of vegetable life—a microscopic red moss tinting the surface of the snow, a few stunted pines, and here and there perhaps a dwindled oak; but to the botanist who has seen the luxuriance of vegetation in its tropical magnificence, all that wretched scene presents another aspect; to him those dwarfs are the representatives of what might be, nay, what has been in a kindlier soil and a more genial climate; he fills up by his conception the miserable actuality presented by these shrubs, and attributes to them—imputes, that is, to them—the majesty of which the undeveloped germ exists already.

Now the difference between those trees seen in themselves, and seen in the conception of their nature's perfectness which has been previously realized, is the difference between man seen in himself and seen in Christ. We are feeble, dwarfish, stunted specimens of humanity. Our best resolves are but withered branches, our holiest deeds unripe and blighted fruit; but to the Infinite Eye, who sees in the perfect One the type and assurance of that which shall be, this dwindled humanity of ours is divine and glorious. Such are we in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God Himself. This is what theologians, at least the wisest of them, meant by "imputed righteousness." I do not mean that all who have written or spoken on the subject had this conception of it, but I believe they who thought truly meant this; they did not suppose that in imputing righteousness there was a kind of figment, a self-deception in the mind of God; they did not mean that by an act of will He chose to consider that every act which Christ did was done by us; that He imputed or reckoned to us the baptism in Jordan and the victory in the wilderness, and the agony in the garden, or that He believed, or acted as if

He believed, that when Christ died, each one of us died: but He saw Humanity submitted to the law of self-sacrifice; in the light of that idea He beholds us as perfect, and is satisfied. In this sense the apostle speaks of those that are imperfect, yet "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." It is true, again, that He died for us, in that we present His sacrifice as ours. The value of the death of Christ consisted in the surrender of self-will In the fortieth Psalm, the value of every other kind of sacrifice being first denied, the words follow, "Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The profound idea contained, therefore, in the death of Christ is the duty of self-surrender.

But in *us* that surrender scarcely deserves the name; even to use the word self-sacrifice covers us with a kind of shame. Then it is that there is an almost boundless joy in acquiescing in the life and death of Christ, recognizing it as ours, and representing it to ourselves and God as what we aim at. If we can not understand how in this sense it can be a sacrifice for us, we may partly realize it by remembering the joy of feeling how art and nature realize for us what we can not realize for ourselves. It is recorded of one of the world's gifted painters that he stood before the masterpiece of the great genius of his age—one which he could never hope to equal, nor even rival—and yet the infinite superiority, so far from crushing him, only elevated his feeling, for he saw realized those conceptions which had floated before him, dim and unsubstantial; in every line and touch he felt a spirit immeasurably superior yet kindred, and he is reported to have exclaimed, with dignified humility, "And I too am a painter!"

We must all have felt, when certain effects in nature, combinations of form and color, have been presented to us, our own idea speaking in intelligible and yet celestial language; when, for instance, the long bars of purple, "edged with intolerable radiance," seemed to float in a sea of pale pure green, when the whole sky seemed to reel with thunder, when the night-wind moaned. It is wonderful how the most commonplace men and women—beings who, as you would have thought, had no conception that rose beyond a commercial speculation or a fashionable entertainment—are elevated by such scenes; how the slumbering grandeur of their nature wakes and acknowledges kindred with the sky and storm. "I can not speak," they would say, "the feelings which are in me; I have had emotions, aspirations, thoughts; I can not put them into words. Look there! listen now to the storm! That is what I meant, only I never could say it out till now." Thus do art and nature speak for us, and thus do we adopt them as our own. This is the way in which His righteousness becomes righteousness for us. This is the way in which the heart presents to God the sacrifice of Christ; gazing on that perfect Life we, as it were, say, "There, that is my religion—that is my righteousness—what I want to be, which I am not—that is my offering, my life as I would wish to give it, freely and not checked, entire and perfect." So the old prophets, their hearts big with unutterable thoughts, searched "what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory which should follow;" and so with us, until it passes into prayer: "My Saviour, fill up the blurred and blotted sketch which my clumsy hand has drawn of a divine life, with the fullness of Thy perfect picture. I feel the beauty which I can not realize:—robe me in Thine unutterable purity:—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

II. The influence of that sacrifice on man is the introduction of the principle of self-sacrifice into his nature—"then were all dead." Observe, again, not He died that we might not die, but that in His death we might be dead, and that in His sacrifice we might become each a sacrifice to God. Moreover, this death is identical with life. They who in the first sentence are called dead, are in the second denominated "they who live." So in another place, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live;" death, therefore, that is, the sacrifice of self, is equivalent to life. Now this rests upon a profound truth. The death of Christ was a representation of the life of God. To me this is the profoundest of all truths, that the whole of the life of God is the sacrifice of self. God is love; love is sacrifice—to give rather than to receive—the blessedness of self-giving. If the life of God were not such, it would be a falsehood to say that God is love; for even in our human nature, that which seeks to enjoy all instead of giving all is known by a very different name from that of love. All the life of God is a flow of this divine self-giving charity. Creation itself is sacrifice—the self-impartation of the Divine Being. Redemption, too, is sacrifice, else it could not be love; for which reason we will not surrender one iota of the truth that the death of Christ was the sacrifice of God—the manifestation once in time of that which is the eternal law of His life.

If man, therefore, is to rise into the life of God, he must be absorbed into the spirit of that sacrifice—he must die with Christ if he would enter into his proper life. For sin is the withdrawing into self and egotism, out of the vivifying life of God, which alone is our true life. The moment the man sins he dies. Know we not how awfully true that sentence is, "Sin revived, and I died?" The vivid life of sin is the death of the man. Have we never felt that our true existence has absolutely in that moment disappeared, and that *we* are not?

I say, therefore, that real human life is a perpetual completion and repetition of the sacrifice of Christ—"all are dead;" the explanation of which follows, "to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again." This is the truth which lies at the bottom of the Romish doctrine of the mass. Rome asserts that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is offered up for the sins of all—that the offering of Christ is forever repeated. To this Protestantism has objected vehemently, that there is but one offering once offered—an objection in itself entirely true; yet the Romish doctrine contains a truth which it is of importance to disengage from the gross and material form with which it has been overlaid. Let us hear St. Paul: "I fill up that which is behindhand of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." Was there then something behindhand of Christ's sufferings remaining uncompleted, of which the sufferings of Paul could be in any sense the complement? He says there was. Could the sufferings of Paul for the Church in any form of correct expression be said to eke out the sufferings that were complete? In one sense it is true to say that there is one offering once offered *for* all. But it is equally true to say that that one offering is valueless, except so far as it is completed and repeated in the life and self-offering *of* all. This is the Christian's sacrifice. Not mechanically completed in the miserable materialism of the mass, but spiritually in the life of all in whom the Crucified lives. The sacrifice of Christ is done over again in every life which is lived, not to self but to God.

Let one concluding observation be made—self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-surrender! Hard doctrines, and impossible! Whereupon, in silent hours, we skeptically ask, Is this possible? is it natural? Let preacher and moralist say what they will, I am not here to sacrifice myself for others. God sent me here for happiness, not misery. Now introduce one sentence of this text of which we have as yet said nothing, and the dark doctrine becomes illuminated—"the *love* of Christ constraineth us." Self-denial, for the sake of self-denial, does no good; self-sacrifice for its own sake is no religious act at all. If you give up a meal for the sake of showing power over self, or for the sake of self-discipline, it is the most miserable of all delusions. You are not more religious in doing this than before. This is mere self-culture, and self-culture being occupied forever about self, leaves you only in that circle of self from which religion is to free you; but to give up a meal that one you love may have it is properly a religious act—no hard and dismal duty, because made easy by affection. To bear pain for the sake of bearing it has in it no moral quality at all, but to bear it rather than surrender truth, or in order to save another, is positive enjoyment as well as ennobling to the soul. Did you ever receive even a blow meant for another, in order to shield that other? Do you not know that there was actual pleasure in the keen pain far beyond the most rapturous thrill of nerve which could be gained from pleasure in the midst of painlessness? Is not the mystic yearning of love expressed in words most purely thus, Let me suffer for him?

This element of love is that which makes this doctrine an intelligible and blessed truth. So sacrifice alone, bare and unrelieved, is ghastly, unnatural, and dead; but self-sacrifice, illuminated by love, is warmth and life; it is the death of Christ, the life of God, the blessedness and only proper life of man.

VIII.

THE POWER OF SORROW.

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."—2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

That which is chiefly insisted on in this verse is the distinction between sorrow and repentance. To grieve over sin is one thing, to repent of it is another.

The apostle rejoiced, not that the Corinthians sorrowed, but that they sorrowed unto repentance. Sorrow has two results; it may end in spiritual life, or in spiritual death; and in themselves, one of these is as natural as the other. Sorrow may produce two kinds of reformation—a transient, or a permanent one—an alteration in habits, which, originating in emotion, will last so long as that emotion continues, and then after a few fruitless efforts be given up—a repentance which will be repented of; or again, a permanent change, which will be reversed by no afterthought—a repentance not to be repented of. Sorrow is in itself, therefore, a thing neither good nor bad: its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hothouse, a great power also in the coffin: it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigor to vegetable life: and warmth too develops with tenfold rapidity the weltering process of dissolution. So too with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay. Our subject therefore is the twofold power of sorrow.

I. The fatal power of the sorrow of the world.
II. The life-giving power of the sorrow that is after God.

The simplest way in which the sorrow of the world works death, is seen in the effect of mere regret for worldly loss. There are certain advantages with which we come into the world. Youth, health, friends, and sometimes property. So long as these are continued we are happy; and because happy, fancy ourselves very grateful to God. We bask in the sunshine of His gifts, and this pleasant sensation of sunning ourselves in life we call religion; that state in which we all are before sorrow comes, to test the temper of the metal of which our souls are made, when the spirits are unbroken and the heart buoyant, when a fresh morning is to a young heart what it is to the skylark. The exuberant burst of joy seems a spontaneous hymn to the Father of all blessing, like the matin carol of the bird; but this is not religion: it is the instinctive utterance of happy feeling, having as little of moral character in it, in the happy human being as in the happy bird.

Nay more: the religion which is only sunned into being by happiness is a suspicious thing—having been warmed by joy, it will become cold when joy is over; and then when these blessings are removed we count ourselves hardly treated, as if we had been defrauded of a right; rebellious hard feelings come; then it is you see people become bitter, spiteful, discontented. At every step in the solemn path of life something must be mourned which will come back no more; the temper that was so smooth becomes rugged and uneven; the benevolence that expanded upon all narrows into an ever-dwindling selfishness—we are alone; and then that death like loneliness deepens as life goes on. The course of man is downward, and he moves with slow and ever more solitary steps, down to the dark silence—the silence of the grave. This is the death of heart; the sorrow of the world has worked death.

Again, there is a sorrow of the world, when sin is grieved for in a worldly spirit. There are two views of sin: in one it is looked upon as wrong—in the other, as producing loss—loss, for example, of character. In such cases, if character could be preserved before the world grief would not come; but the paroxysms of misery fall upon our proud spirit when our guilt is made public. The most distinct instance we have of this is in the life of Saul. In the midst of his apparent grief, the thing still uppermost was that he had forfeited his kingly character: almost the only longing was, that Samuel should honor him before his people. And hence it comes to pass, that often remorse and anguish only begin with exposure. Suicide takes place, not when the act of wrong is done but when the guilt is known, and hence, too, many a one becomes hardened who would otherwise have remained tolerably happy; in consequence of which we blame the exposure, not the guilt; we say if it had been hushed up all would have been well; that the servant who robbed his master was ruined by taking away his character; and that if the sin had been passed over repentance might have taken place, and he might have remained a respectable member of society. Do not think so. It is quite true that remorse was produced by exposure, and that the remorse was fatal; the sorrow which worked death arose from that exposure, and so far exposure may be called the cause: had it never taken place, respectability, and comparative peace, might have continued; but outward respectability is not change of heart.

It is well known that the corpse has been preserved for centuries in the iceberg, or in antiseptic peat; and that when atmospheric air was introduced to the exposed surface it crumbled into dust. Exposure worked dissolution, but it only manifested the death which was already there; so with sorrow, it is not the living heart which drops to pieces or crumbles into dust, when it is revealed. Exposure did not work death in the Corinthian sinner, but life.

There is another form of grief for sin, which the apostle would not have rejoiced to see; it is when the hot tears come from pride. No two tones of feeling, apparently similar, are more unlike than that in which Saul exclaimed, "I have played the fool exceedingly," and that in which the publican cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The charge of folly brought against one's self only proves that we feel bitterly for having lost our own self-respect. It is a humiliation to have forfeited the idea which a man had formed of his own character—to find that the very excellence on which he prided himself is the one in which he has failed. If there were a virtue for which Saul was conspicuous it was generosity; yet it was exactly in this point of generosity in which he discovered himself to have failed, when he was overtaken on the mountain, and his life spared by the very man whom he was hunting to the death with feelings of the meanest jealousy. Yet there was no real repentance there; there was none of that in which a man is sick of state and pomp. Saul could still rejoice in regal splendor, go about complaining of himself to the Ziphites, as if he was the most ill-treated and friendless of mankind; he was still jealous of his reputation, and anxious to be well thought of. Quite different is the tone in which the publican, who felt himself a sinner, asked for mercy. He heard the contumelious expression of the Pharisee, "this publican." With no resentment, he meekly bore it as a matter naturally to be taken for granted—"he did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven;" he was as a worm which turns in agony, but not revenge, upon the foot which treads it into the dust.

Now this sorrow of Saul's, too, works death: no merit can restore self-respect; when once a man has found himself out he can not be deceived again. The heart is as a stone: a speck of canker corrodes and spreads within. What on this earth remains, but endless sorrow, for him who has ceased to respect himself, and has no God to turn to?

II. The divine power of sorrow.

1. It works repentance. By repentance is meant, in Scripture, change of life, alteration of habits, renewal of heart. This is the aim and meaning of all sorrow. The consequences of sin are meant to wean from sin. The penalty annexed to it is in the first instance, corrective, not penal. Fire burns the child, to teach it one of the truths of this universe—the property of fire to burn. The first time it cuts its hand with a sharp knife it has gained a lesson which it never will forget. Now, in the case of pain this experience is seldom, if ever, in vain. There is little chance of a child forgetting that fire will burn, and that sharp steel will cut; but the moral lessons contained in the penalties annexed to wrong-doing are just as truly intended, though they are by no means so unerring in enforcing their application. The fever in the veins and the headache which succeed intoxica-

tion, are meant to warn against excess. On the first occasion they are simply corrective; in every succeeding one they assume more and more a penal character in proportion as the conscience carries with them the sense of ill desert.

Sorrow, then, has done its work when it deters from evil; in other words, when it works repentance. In the sorrow of the world, the obliquity of the heart towards evil is not cured; it seems as if nothing cured it: heartache and trials come in vain; the history of life at last is what it was at first. The man is found erring where he erred before. The same course, begun with the certainty of the same desperate end which has taken place so often before.

They have reaped the whirlwind, but they will again sow the wind. Hence I believe that life-giving sorrow is less remorse for that which is irreparable, than anxiety to save that which remains. The sorrow that ends in death hangs in funeral weeds over the sepulchres of the past. Yet the present does not become more wise. Not one resolution is made more firm, nor one habit more holy. Grief is all. Whereas sorrow avails *only* when the past is converted into experience, and from failure lessons are learned which never are to be forgotten.

2. Permanence of alteration; for after all, a steady reformation is a more decisive test of the value of mourning than depth of grief.

The susceptibility of emotion varies with individuals. Some men feel intensely, others suffer less keenly; but this is constitutional, belonging to nervous temperament rather than to moral character. *This* is the characteristic of the divine sorrow, that it is a repentance "not repented of;" no transient, short-lived resolutions, but sustained resolve.

And the beautiful law is, that in proportion as the repentance increases the grief diminishes. "I rejoice," says Paul, that "I made you sorry, though it were but for a time." Grief for a time, repentance forever. And few things more signally prove the wisdom of this apostle than his way of dealing with this grief of the Corinthian. He tried no artificial means of intensifying it—did not urge the duty of dwelling upon it, magnifying it, nor even of gauging and examining it. So soon as grief had done its work the apostle was anxious to dry useless tears—he even feared lest haply such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. "A true penitent," says Mr. Newman, "never forgives himself." Oh false estimate of the Gospel of Christ and of the heart of man! A proud remorse does not forgive itself the forfeiture of its own dignity; but it is the very beauty of the penitence which is according to God, that at last the sinner, realizing God's forgiveness, does learn to forgive himself. For what other purpose did St. Paul command the Church of Corinth to give ecclesiastical absolution, but in order to afford a symbol and assurance of the Divine pardon, in which the guilty man's grief should not be overwhelming, but that he should become reconciled to himself? What is meant by the publican's going *down to his house* justified, but that he felt at peace with himself and God?

3. It is sorrow with God, here called godly sorrow; in the margin sorrowing according to God.

God sees sin not in its consequences but in itself; a thing infinitely evil, even if the consequences were happiness to the guilty instead of misery. So sorrow according to God is to see sin as God sees it. The grief of Peter was as bitter as that of Judas. He went out and wept bitterly; how bitterly none can tell but they who have learned to look on sin as God does. But in Peter's grief there was an element of hope; and that sprung precisely from this—that he saw God in it all. Despair of self did not lead to despair of God.

This is the great, peculiar feature of this sorrow: God is there, accordingly self is less prominent. It is not a microscopic self-examination, nor a mourning in which self is ever uppermost: *my* character gone; the greatness of *my* sin; the forfeiture of *my* salvation. The thought of God absorbs all that. I believe the feeling of true penitence would express itself in such words as these:—There *is* a righteousness, though I have not attained it. There is a purity, and a love, and a beauty, though my life exhibits little of it. In that I can rejoice. Of that I can feel the surpassing loveliness. My doings? They are worthless, I can not endure to think of them. I am not thinking of them. I have something else to think of. There, there; in that life I see it. And so the Christian—gazing not on what he is, but on what he desires to be—dares in penitence to say, That righteousness is mine: dares, even when the recollection of his sin is most vivid and most poignant, to say with Peter, thinking less of himself than of God, and sorrowing as it were with God—"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

IX.

SENSUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXCITEMENT.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."—Eph. v. 17, 18.

There is evidently a connection between the different branches of this sentence—for ideas can not be properly contrasted which have not some connection—but what that connection is, is not at first sight clear. It almost appears like a profane and irreverent juxtaposition to contrast fullness of the Spirit with fullness of wine. Moreover, the structure of the whole context is antithetical. Ideas are opposed to each other in pairs of contraries; for instance, "fools" is the exact opposite to "wise;" "unwise," as opposed to "understanding," its proper opposite.

And here again, there must be the same true antithesis between drunkenness and spiritual fullness. The propriety of this opposition lies in the intensity of feeling produced in both cases. There is one intensity of feeling produced by stimulating the senses, another by vivifying the spiritual life within. The one commences with impulses from without, the other is guarded by forces from within. Here then is the similarity, and here the dissimilarity, which constitutes the propriety of the contrast. One is ruin, the other salvation. One degrades, the other exalts. This contrast then is our subject for to-day.

I. The effects are similar. On the day of Pentecost, when the first influences of the Spirit descended on the early Church, the effects resembled intoxication. They were full of the Spirit, and mocking by-standers said, "These men are full of new wine;" for they found themselves elevated into the ecstasy of a life higher than their own, possessed of powers which they could not control; they spoke incoherently and irregularly; to the most part of those assembled, unintelligibly.

Now compare with this the impression produced upon savage nations—suppose those early ages in which the spectacle of intoxication was presented for the first time. They saw a man under the influence of a force different from and in some respects inferior to, their own. To them the bacchanal appeared a being half inspired; his frenzy seemed a thing for reverence and awe, rather than for horror and disgust; the spirit which possessed him must be, they thought, divine; they deified it, worshipped it under different names as a god; even to a clearer insight the effects are wonderfully similar. It is almost proverbial among soldiers that the daring produced by wine is easily mistaken for the self-devotion of a brave heart.

The play of imagination in the brain of the opium-eater is as free as that of genius itself, and the creations produced in that state by the pen or pencil are as wildly beautiful as those owed to the nobler influences. In years gone by, the oratory of the statesman in the senate has been kindled by semi-intoxication, when his noble utterances were set down by his auditors to the inspiration of patriotism.

It is this very resemblance which deceives the drunkard: he is led on by his feelings as well as by his imagination. It is not the sensual pleasure of the glutton that fascinates him; it is those fine thoughts and those quickened sensibilities which were excited in that state, which he is powerless to produce out of his own being, or by his own powers, and which he expects to reproduce by the same means. The experience of our first parent is repeated in him: at the very moment when he expects to find himself as the gods, knowing good and evil, he discovers that he is unexpectedly degraded, his health wrecked, and his heart demoralized. Hence it is almost as often the finer as the baser spirits of our race which are found the victims of such indulgence. Many will remember, while I speak, the names of the gifted of their species, the degraded men of genius who were the victims of these deceptive influences; the half-inspired painter, poet, musician, who began by soothing opiates to calm the over-excited nerves or stimulate the exhausted brain, who mistook the sensation for somewhat half divine, and became, morally and physically, wrecks of manhood, degraded even in their mental conceptions. It was therefore no mere play of words which induced the apostle to bring these two things together. That which might else seem irreverent appears to have been a deep knowledge of human nature; he contrasts, because his rule was to distinguish two things which are easily mistaken for each other.

The second point of resemblance is the necessity of intense feeling. We have fullness—fullness, it may be, produced by outward stimulus, or else by an inpouring of the Spirit. What we want is life, "more life, and fuller." To escape from monotony, to get away from the life of mere routine and habits, to feel that we are alive—with more of surprise and wakefulness in our existence. To have less of the gelid, torpid, tortoise-like existence. "To feel the years before us." To be consciously existing.

Now this desire lies at the bottom of many forms of life which are apparently as diverse as possible. It constitutes the fascination of the gambler's life: money is not what he wants—were he possessed of thousands to-day he would risk them all to-morrow—but it is that being perpetually on the brink of enormous wealth and utter ruin, he is compelled to realize at every moment the possibility of the extremes of life. Every moment is one of feeling. This too, constitutes the charm of all those forms of life in which the gambling feeling is predominant—where a sense of skill is blended with a mixture of chance. If you ask the statesman why it is, that possessed as he is of wealth, he quits his princely home for the dark metropolis, he would reply, "that he loves the excitement of a political existence." It is this, too, which gives to the warrior's and the traveller's existence such peculiar reality; and it is this in a far lower form which stimulates the pleasure of a fashionable life—which sends the votaries of the world in a constant round from the capital to the watering-place, and from the watering-place to the capital; what they crave for is the power of feeling intensely.

Now the proper and natural outlet for this feeling is the life of the Spirit. What is religion but fuller life? To live in the Spirit, what is it but to have keener feelings and mightier powers—to rise into a higher consciousness of life? What is religion's self but feeling? The highest form of religion is charity. Love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. This is an intense feeling, too intense to be excited, profound in its calmness, yet it rises at times in its higher flights into that ecstatic life which glances in a moment intuitively through ages. These are the pentecostal hours of our existence, when the Spirit comes as a mighty rushing wind, in cloven tongues of fire, filling the soul with God.

II. The dissimilarity or contrast in St. Paul's idea. The one fullness begins from without, the other from within. The one proceeds from the flesh and then influences the emotions. The other reverses this order. Stimulants like wine inflame the senses, and through them set the imaginations and feelings on fire; and the law of our spiritual being is, that that which begins with the flesh sensualizes the spirit—

whereas that which commences in the region of the spirit spiritualizes the senses in which it subsequently stirs emotion. But the misfortune is that men mistake this law of their emotions; and the fatal error is, when having found spiritual feelings existing in connection, and associated with, fleshly sensations, men expect by the mere irritation of the emotions of the frame to reproduce those high and glorious feelings.

You might conceive the recipients of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost acting under this delusion; it is conceivable that having observed certain bodily phenomena—for instance, incoherent utterances and thrilled sensibilities coexisting with those sublime spiritualities—they might have endeavored, by a repetition of those incoherencies, to obtain a fresh descent of the Spirit. In fact, this was exactly what was tried in after ages of the Church. In those events of Church history which are denominated revivals in the camp of the Methodist and the Ranter, a direct attempt was made to arouse the emotions by exciting addresses and vehement language. Convulsions, shrieks, and violent emotions were produced, and the unfortunate victims of this mistaken attempt to produce the cause by the effect, fancied themselves, and were pronounced by others, converted. Now the misfortune is, that this delusion is the more easy from the fact that the results of the two kinds of causes resemble each other. You may galvanize the nerve of a corpse till the action of a limb startles the spectator with the appearance of life. It is not life, it is only a spasmodic hideous mimicry of life. Men having seen that the spiritual is always associated with forms, endeavor by reproducing the forms to recall spirituality; you do produce thereby a something that looks like spirituality, but it is a resemblance only. The worst case of all occurs in the department of the affections. That which begins in the heart ennobles the whole animal being, but that which begins in the inferior departments of our being is the most entire degradation and sensualizing of the soul.

Now it is from this point of thought that we learn to extend the apostle's principle. Wine is but a specimen of a class of stimulants. All that begins from *without* belongs to the same class. The stimulus may be afforded by almost any enjoyment of the senses. Drunkenness may come from any thing wherein is excess: from over-indulgence in society, in pleasure, in music, and in the delight of listening to oratory, nay, even from the excitement of sermons and religious meetings. The prophet tells us of those who are drunken, and not with wine.

The other point of difference is one of effect. Fullness of the Spirit calms; fullness produced by excitement satiates and exhausts. They who know the world of fashion tell us that the tone adopted there is, either to be, or to affect to be, sated with enjoyment, to be proof against surprise, to have lost all keenness of enjoyment, and to have all keenness of wonder gone. That which ought to be men's shame becomes their boast—unsusceptibility of any fresh emotion.

Whether this be real or affected matters not; it is, in truth, the real result of the indulgence of the senses. The law is this: the "crime of sense is avenged by sense which wears with time;" for it has been well remarked that the terrific punishment attached to the habitual indulgence of the senses is, that the incitements to enjoyment increase in proportion as the power of enjoyment fades.

Experience at last forbids even the hope of enjoyment; the sin of the intoxicated soul is loathed, detested, abhorred; yet it is done. The irritated sense, like an avenging fury, goads on with a restlessness of craving, and compels a reiteration of the guilt though it has ceased to charm.

To this danger our own age is peculiarly exposed. In the earlier and simpler ages, the need of keen feeling finds a natural and safe outlet in compulsory exertions. For instance, in the excitement of real warfare, and in the necessity of providing the sustenance of life, warlike habits and healthy labor stimulate without exhausting life. But in proportion as civilization advances, a large class of the community are exempted from the necessity of these, and thrown upon a life of leisure. Then it is that artificial life begins, and artificial expedients become necessary to sharpen the feelings amongst the monotony of existence; every amusement and all literature become more pungent in their character; life is no longer a thing proceeding from powers *within*, but sustained by new impulses from without.

There is one peculiar form of this danger to which I would specially direct your attention. There is one nation in Europe which, more than any other, has been subjected to these influences. In ages of revolution, nations live fast; centuries of life are passed in fifty years of time. In such a state, individuals become subjected more or less to the influences which are working around them. Scarcely an enjoyment or a book can be met with which does not bear the impress of this intensity. Now, the particular danger to which I allude is French novels. French romances, and French plays. The overflowings of that cup of excitement have reached our shores. I do not say that these works contain any thing coarse or gross—better if it were so: evil which comes in a form of grossness is not nearly so dangerous as that which comes veiled in gracefulness and sentiment. Subjects which are better not touched upon at all are discussed, examined, and exhibited in all the most seductive forms of imagery. You would be shocked at seeing your son in a fit of intoxication; yet, I say it solemnly, better that your son should reel through the streets in a fit of drunkenness, than that the delicacy of your daughter's mind should be injured, and her imagination inflamed with false fire. Twenty-four hours will terminate the evil in the one case. Twenty-four hours will not exhaust the effects of the other; you must seek the consequences at the end of many, many years.

I speak that which I do know; and if the earnest warning of one who has seen the dangers of which he speaks realized, can reach the heart of one Christian parent, he will put a ban on all such works, and not suffer his children's hearts to be excited by a drunkenness which is worse than that of wine. For the worst of it is, that the men of our time are not yet alive to this growing evil; they are elsewhere—in their studies, counting-houses, professions—not knowing the food, or rather poison, on which their wives' and daughters' intellectual life is sustained. It is precisely those who are most unfitted to sustain the danger, whose feelings need restraint instead of spur, and whose imaginations are most inflammable, that are specially exposed to it.

On the other hand, spiritual life calms while it fills. True it is that there are pentecostal moments when such life reaches the stage of ecstasy. But these were given to the Church to prepare her for suffering, to give her martyrs a glimpse of blessedness, which might sustain them afterwards in the terrible struggles of death. True it is that there are pentecostal hours when the soul is surrounded by a kind of glory, and we are tempted to make tabernacles upon the mount, as if life were meant for rest; but out of that very cloud there comes a voice telling of the cross, and bidding us descend into the common world again, to simple duties and humble life. This very principle seems to be contained in the text. The apostle's remedy for this artificial feeling is—"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs."

Strange remedy! Occupation fit for children—too simple far for men: as astonishing as the remedy prescribed by the prophet to Naaman—to wash in simple water, and be clean; yet therein lies a very important truth. In ancient medical phraseology, herbs possessed of healing natures were called simples; in God's laboratory, all things that heal are simple

—all natural enjoyments, all the deepest, are simple too. At night, man fills his banquet-hall with the glare of splendor which fevers as well as fires the heart; and at the very same hour, as if they intended contrast, the quiet stars of God steal forth, shedding, together with the deepest feeling, the profoundest sense of calm. One from whose knowledge of the sources of natural feeling there lies almost no appeal, has said that to him,

> "The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

This is exceedingly remarkable in the life of Christ. No contrast is more striking than that presented by the thought, that that deep and beautiful life was spent in the midst of mad Jerusalem. Remember the Son of Man standing quietly in the porches of Bethesda, when the streets all around were filled with the revelry of innumerable multitudes, who had come to be present at the annual feast. Remember Him pausing to weep over his country's doomed metropolis, unexcited, while the giddy crowd around Him were shouting "Hosannah to the Son of David!" Remember Him in Pilate's judgment-hall, meek, self-possessed, standing in the serenity of truth, while all around Him was agitation—hesitation in the breast of Pilate, hatred in the bosom of the Pharisees, and consternation in the heart of the disciples.

And this, in truth, is what we want: we want the vision of a calmer and simpler beauty, to tranquillize us in the midst of artificial tastes—we want the draught of a purer spring to cool the flame of our excited life; we want, in other words, the Spirit of the life of Christ, simple, natural, with power to calm and soothe the feelings which it rouses: the fullness of the Spirit which can never intoxicate!

X.

PURITY.

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and nbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." —Titus i. 15.

For the evils of this world there are two classes of remedies—one is the world's, the other is God's. The world proposes to remedy evil by adjusting the circumstances of this life to man's desires. The world says, Give us a perfect set of *circumstances*, and then we shall have a set of perfect men. This principle lies at the root of the system called Socialism. Socialism proceeds on the principle that all moral and even physical evil arises from unjust laws. If the cause be remedied, the effect will be good. But Christianity throws aside all that as merely chimerical. It proves that the fault is not in outward circumstances but in ourselves. Like the wise physician who, instead of busying himself with transcendental theories to improve the climate and the outward circumstances of man, endeavors to relieve and get rid of the tendencies of disease which are from within, Christianity, leaving all outward circumstances to ameliorate themselves, fastens its attention on the spirit which has to deal with them. Christ has declared that the kingdom of heaven is from within. He said to the Pharisee, "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within ye are full of extortion and excess." The remedy for all this is a large and liberal charity, so overflowing that "unto the pure all things are pure." To internal purity all external things *become* pure. The principle that St. Paul has here laid down is, that each man is the creator of his own world; he walks in a universe of his own creation.

As the free air is to one out of health the cause of cold and diseased lungs, so to the healthy man it is a source of greater vigor. The rotten fruit is sweet to the worm, but nauseous to the palate of man. It is the same air and the same fruit acting differently upon different beings. To different men a different world—to one all pollution, to another all purity. To the noble all things are noble, to the mean all things are contemptible.

The subject divides itself into two parts.

I. The apostle's principle.
II. The application of the principle.

Here we have the same principle again; each man creates his own world. Take it in its simplest form. The eye creates the outward world it sees. We see not things as they are, but as God has made the eye to receive them.

In its strictest sense, the creation of a new man is the creation of a new universe. Conceive an eye so constructed as that the planets and all within them should be minutely seen, and all that is near should be dim and invisible like things seen through a telescope, or as we see through a magnifying-glass the plumage of the butterfly and the bloom upon the peach; then it is manifestly clear that we have called into existence actually a new *creation*, and not new objects. The mind's eye creates a world for itself.

Again, the visible world presents a different aspect to each individual man. You will say that the same things you see are seen by all—that the forest, the valley, the flood, and the sea, are the same to all; and yet all these things so seen, to different minds are a myriad of different universes. One man sees in that noble river an emblem of eternity; he closes his lips and feels that God is there. Another sees nothing in it but a very convenient road for transporting his spices, silks, and merchandise. To one this world appears useful, to another beautiful. Whence comes the difference? From the soul within us. It can make of this world a vast chaos—"a mighty maze without a plan;" or a mere machine—a collection of lifeless forces; or it can make it the living vesture of God, the tissue through which He can become visible to us. In the spirit in which we look on it the world is an arena for mere self advancement, or a place for noble deeds, in which self is forgotten and God is all.

Observe, this effect is traceable even in that produced by our different and changeful moods. We make and unmake a world more than once in the space of a single day. In trifling moods all seems trivial. In serious moods all seems solemn. Is the song of the nightingale merry or plaintive? Is it the voice of joy or the harbinger of gloom? Sometimes one, and sometimes the other, according to our different moods. We hear the ocean furious or exulting. The thunder-claps are grand, or angry, according to the different states of our mind. Nay, the very church-bells chime sadly or merrily, as our associations determine. They speak the language of our passing moods. The young adventurer revolving sanguine plans upon the milestones, hears them speak to him as God did to Hagar in the wilderness, bidding him back to perseverance and greatness. The soul spreads its own hue over every thing; the shroud or wedding-garment of nature is woven in the loom of our own feelings. This universe is the express image and direct counterpart of the souls that dwell in it. Be noble-minded, and all nature replies—I am divine, the child of God; be thou, too His child, and noble. Be mean, and all nature dwindles into a contemptible smallness.

In the second place, there are two ways in which this principle is true. To the pure, all things and all persons are pure, because their purity makes all seem pure.

There are some who go through life complaining of this world; they say they have found nothing but treachery and deceit; the poor are ungrateful, and the rich are selfish. Yet we do not find such the best men. Experience tells us that each man most keenly and unerringly detects in others the vice with which he is most familiar himself.

Persons seem to each man what he is himself. One who suspects hypocrisy in the world is rarely transparent; the man constantly on the watch for cheating is generally dishonest; he who suspects impurity is prurient. This is the principle to which Christ alludes when he says, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and behold all things are clean unto you."

Have a large charity! Large "charity hopeth all things." Look at that sublime apostle who saw the churches of Ephesus and Thessalonica pure, because he saw them in his own large love, and painted them, not as they were, but as his heart filled up the picture; he viewed them in the light of his own nobleness, as representations of his own purity.

Once more: to the pure all *things* are pure, as well as all persons. That which is natural lies not in things, but in the minds of men. There is a difference between prudery and modesty. Prudery detects wrong where no wrong is; the wrong lies in the thoughts, and not in the objects. There is something of over-sensitiveness and over-delicacy which shows not innocence, but an inflammable imagination. And men of the world can not understand that those subjects and thoughts which to them are full of torture, can be harmless, suggesting nothing evil to the pure in heart.

Here, however, beware! No sentence of Scripture is more frequently in the lips of persons who permit themselves much license, than the text, "To the pure all things are pure." Yes, all things natural, but not artificial—scenes which pamper the tastes, which excite the senses. Innocence feels healthily. To it all nature is pure. But, just as the dove trembles at the approach of the hawk, and the young calf shudders at the lion never seen before, so innocence shrinks instinctively from what is wrong by the same divine instinct. If that which is wrong seems pure, then the heart is not pure but vitiated. To the right-minded all that is right in the course of this world seems pure. Abraham, looking forward to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, entreated that it might be averted, and afterwards acquiesced! To the disordered mind "all things are out of course." This is the spirit which pervades the whole of the Ecclesiastes. There were two things which were perpetually suggesting themselves to the mind of Solomon; the intolerable sameness of this world, and the constant desire for change. And yet that same world, spread before the serene eye of God, was pronounced to be all "very good."

This disordered universe is the picture of your own mind. We make a wilderness by encouraging artificial wants, by creating sensitive and selfish feelings; then we project every thing stamped with the impress of our own feelings, and we gather the whole of creation into our own pained being—"the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The world you complain of as impure and wrong is not God's world, but your world; the blight, the dullness, the blank, are all your own. The light which is in you has become darkness, and therefore the light itself is dark.

Again, to the pure all things not only seem pure, but are really so because they are made such.

First, as regards persons. It is a marvellous thing to see how a pure and innocent heart purifies all that it approaches. The most ferocious natures are soothed and tamed by innocence. And so with human beings, there is a delicacy so pure that vicious men in its presence become almost pure; all of purity which is in them is brought out; like attaches itself to like. The pure heart becomes a centre of attraction round which similar atoms gather, and from which dissimilar ones are repelled. A corrupt heart elicits in an hour all that is bad in us; a spiritual one brings out and draws to itself all that is best and purest. Such was Christ. He stood in the world the Light of the world, to which all sparks of light gradually gathered. He stood in the presence of impurity, and men became pure. Note this in the history of Zaccheus. In answer to the invitation of the Son of Man, he says, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done wrong to any man I restore him fourfold." So also the Scribe, "Well, Master, thou hast well said, there is one God, and there is none other than He." To the pure Saviour all was pure. "He was lifted up on high, and drew all men unto Him."

Lastly, all situations are pure to the pure. According to the world, some professions are reckoned honorable and some dishonorable. Men judge according to a standard merely conventional, and not by that of moral rectitude. Yet it was in truth the men who were in these situations which made them such. In the days of the Redeemer the publican's occupation was a degraded one, merely because low base men filled that place. But since He was born into the world a poor, laboring man, poverty is noble and dignified, and toil is honorable. To the man who feels that "the king's daughter is all glorious within," no outward situation can seem inglorious or impure.

There are three words which express almost the same thing, but whose meaning is entirely different. These are, the gibbet, the scaffold, and the cross. So far as we know, none die on the gibbet but men of dishonorable and base life. The scaffold suggests to our minds the noble deaths of our greatest martyrs. The cross was once a gibbet, but it is now the highest name we have, because He hung on it. Christ has purified and ennobled the cross. This principle runs through life. It is not the situation which makes the man, but the man who makes the situation. The slave may be a freeman. The monarch may be a slave. Situations are noble or ignoble, as we make them.

From all this subject we learn to understand two things. Hence we understand the Fall. When man fell, the world fell with him. All creation received a shock. Thorns, briers, and thistles, sprang up. They were there before, but to the now restless and impatient hands of men they became obstacles and weeds. Death, which must ever have existed as a form of dissolution, a passing from one state to another, became a curse; the sting of death was sin—unchanged in itself, it changed in man. A dark heavy cloud rested on it—the shadow of his own guilty heart.

Hence, too, we understand the Millennium. The Bible says that these things are not to be forever. There are glorious things to come. Just as in my former illustration, the alteration of the eye called new worlds into being, so now nothing more is needed than to re-create the soul—the mirror on which all things are reflected. Then is realized the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, I create all things new," "new heavens and a new earth."

The conclusion of this verse proves to us why all these new creations were called into being—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." To be righteous makes all things new. We do not want a new world, we want *new hearts.* Let the Spirit of God purify society, and to the pure all things will be pure. The earth will put off the look of weariness and gloom which it has worn so long, and then the glorious language of the prophets will be fulfilled—"The forests will break out with singing, and the desert will blossom as the rose."

XI.

UNITY AND PEACE.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."—Col. iii. 15.

There is something in these words that might surprise us. It might surprise us to find that peace is urged on us as a duty. There can be no duty except where there is a matter of obedience; and it might seem to us that peace is a something over which we have no power. It is a privilege to have peace, but it would appear as if there were no power of control within the mind of a man able to insure that peace for itself. "Yet," says the apostle, "let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

It would seem to *us* as if peace were as far beyond our own control as happiness. Unquestionably, we are not masters, on our own responsibility, of our own happiness. Happiness is the gratification of every innocent desire; but it is not given to us to insure the gratification of every desire; therefore, happiness is not a duty, and it is nowhere written in the Scripture, "You must be happy." But we find it written by the Apostle Paul, "Be ye thankful," implying, therefore, that peace is a duty. The apostle says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts;" from which we infer that peace is attainable, and within the reach of our own wills; that if there be not repose there is blame; if there be not peace but discord in the heart, there is something wrong.

This is the more surprising when we remember the circumstances under which these words were written. They were written from Rome, where the apostle lay in prison, daily and hourly expecting a violent death. They were written in days of persecution, when false doctrines were rife, and religious animosities fierce; they were written in an epistle abounding with the most earnest and eager controversy, whereby it is therefore implied, that according to the conception of the Apostle Paul, it is possible for a Christian to live at the very point of death, and in the very midst of danger—that it is possible for him to be breathing the atmosphere of religious controversy—it is possible for him to be surrounded by bitterness, and even take up the pen of controversy himself—and yet his soul shall not lose its own deep peace, nor the power of the infinite repose and rest of God. Joined with the apostle's command to be at peace, we find another doctrine, the doctrine of the unity of the Church of Christ. "To the which ye are called in one body," in order that ye may be at peace; in other words, the unity of the Church of Christ is the basis on which, and on which alone, can be built the possibility of the inward peace of individuals.

And tnus, my Christian brethren, our subject divides itself into these two simple branches:

I. The unity of the Church of Christ.
II. The inward peace of the members of that Church.

I. The first subject, then, which we have to consider, is the unity of the Church of Christ.

And the first thing we have to do is both clearly to define and understand the meaning of that word "unity." I distinguish the unity of comprehensiveness from the unity of mere singularity. The word one, as oneness, is an ambiguous word. There is a oneness belonging to the army as well as to every soldier in the army. The army is one, and that is the oneness of unity; the soldier is one, but that is the oneness of the unit. There is a difference between the oneness of a body and the oneness of a member of that body. The body is many, and a unity of manifold comprehensiveness. An arm or a member of a body is one, but that is the unity of singularity. Without unity, my Christian brethren, peace must be impossible. There can be no peace in the one single soldier of an army. You do not speak of the harmony of one member of a body. There is peace in an army, or in a kingdom joined with other kingdoms; there is harmony in a member united with other members. There is no peace in a unit, there is no possibility of the harmony of that which is but one in itself. In order to have peace you must have a higher unity, and therein consists the unity of God's own Being. The unity of God is the basis of the peace of God—meaning by the unity of God the comprehensive manifoldness of God, and not merely the singularity in the number of God's Being. When the Unitarian speaks of God as one, he means simply singularity of number. We mean that He is of manifold comprehensiveness—that there is unity between His various powers. Amongst the personalities or powers of His Being there is no discord, but perfect harmony, entire union; and that, brethren, is repose, the blessedness of infinite rest, that belongs to the unity of God—"I and my Father are one."

The second thing which we observe respecting this unity is, that it subsists between things not similar or alike, but things dissimilar or unlike. There is no unity in the separate atoms of a sand-pit; they are things similar; there is an aggregate or collection of them. Even if they be hardened in a mass they are not one, they do not form a unity: they are simply a mass. There is no unity in a flock of sheep: it is simply a repetition of a number of things similar to each other. If you strike off from a thousand five hundred, or if you strike off nine hundred, there is nothing lost of unity, because there never was unity. A flock of one thousand or a flock of five is just as much a flock as any other number.

On the other hand, let us turn to the unity of peace which the apostle speaks of, and we find it is something different; it is made up of dissimilar members, without which dissimilarity there could be no unity. Each is imperfect in itself, each supplying what it has in itself to the deficiencies and wants of the other members. So, if you strike off from this body any one member, if you cut off an arm, or tear out an eye, instantly the unity is destroyed; you have no longer an entire and perfect body, there is nothing but a remnant of the whole, a part, a portion; no unity whatever.

This will help us to understand the unity of the Church of Christ. If the ages and the centuries of the Church of Christ, if the different Churches whereof it was composed, if the different members of each Church, were similar—one in this, that they all held the same views, all spoke the same words, all viewed truth from the same side, they would have no unity; but would simply be an aggregate of atoms, the sand-pit over again—units, multiplied it may be to infinity, but you would have no real unity, and therefore no peace. No unity—for wherein consists the unity of the Church of Christ? The unity of ages, brethren, consists it in this—that every age is merely the repetition of another age, and that which is held in one is held in another? Precisely in the same way, that is *not* the unity of the ages of the Christian Church.

Every century and every age has held a different truth, has put forth different fragments of the truth. In early ages, for example, by martyrdom was proclaimed the eternal sanctity of truth, rather than give up which a man must lose his life..... In our own age it is quite plain those are not the themes which engage us, or the truths which we put in force now. This age, by its revolutions, its socialisms, proclaims another truth—the brotherhood of the Church of

Christ; so that the unity of ages subsists on the same principle as that of the unity of the human body: and just as every separate ray—the violet, the blue, and the orange—make up the white ray, so these manifold fragments of truth blended together make up the one entire and perfect white ray of truth. And with regard to individuals, taking the case of the Reformation, it was given to one Church to proclaim that salvation is a thing received, and not local; to another to proclaim justification by faith; to another the sovereignty of God; to another the supremacy of the Scriptures; to another the right of private judgment, the duty of the individual conscience. Unite these all, and then you have the Reformation one—one in spite of manifoldness; those very varieties by which they have approached this proving them to be one. Disjoint them and then you have some miserable sect—Calvinism, or Unitarianism; the unity has dispersed. And so again with the unity of the Churches. Whereby would we produce unity? Would we force on other Churches our Anglicanism? Would we have our thirty-nine articles, our creeds, our prayers, our rules and regulations, accepted by every Church throughout the world? If that were unity, then in consistency you are bound to demand that in God's world there shall be but one color instead of the manifold harmony and accordance of which this universe is full; that there should be but one chanted note—the one which we conceive most beautiful. This is not the unity of the Church of God. The various Churches advance different doctrines and truths. The Church of Germany something different from those of the Church of England. The Church of Rome, even in its idolatry, proclaims truths which we would be glad to seize. By the worship of the Virgin, the purity of women; by the rigor of ecclesiastical ordinances, the sanctity and permanence of eternal order; by the very priesthood itself, the necessity of the guidance of man by man. Nay, even the dissenting bodies themselves—mere atoms of aggregates as they are—stand forward and proclaim at least this truth, the separateness of the individual conscience, the right of independence.

Peace subsists not between things exactly alike. We do not speak of peace in a single country. We say peace subsists between different countries where war *might* be. There can be no *peace* between two men who agree in every thing; peace subsists between those who differ. There is no peace between Baptist and Baptist; so far as they are Baptists, there is perfect accordance and agreement. There may be peace between you and the Romanist, the Jew, or the Dissenter, because there are angles of sharpness which might come into collision if they were not subdued and softened by the power of love. It was given to the Apostle Paul to discern that this was the ground of unity. In the Church of Christ he saw men with different views, and he said, So far from that variety destroying unity, it was the only ground of unity. There are many doctrines, all of them different, but let those varieties be blended together—in other words, let there be the peace of love, and then you will have unity.

Once more: this unity, whereof the apostle speaks, consists in submission to one single influence or spirit. Wherein consists the unity of the body? Consists it not in this—that there is one life uniting, making all the separate members one? Take away the life, and the members fall to pieces: they are no longer one; decomposition begins, and every element separates, no longer having any principle of cohesion or union with the rest.

There is not one of us who, at some time or other, has not been struck with the power there is in a single living influence. Have we never, for instance, felt the power wherewith the orator unites and holds together a thousand men as if they were but one; with flashing eyes and throbbing hearts, all attentive to his words, and by the difference of their attitudes, by the variety of the expressions of their countenances, testifying to the unity of that single living feeling with which he had inspired them? Whether it be indignation, whether it be compassion, or whether it be enthusiasm, that one living influence made the thousand, for the time, one. Have we not heard how, even in this century in which we live, the various and conflicting feelings of the people of this country were concentrated into one, when the threat of foreign invasion had fused down and broken the edges of conflict and variance, and from shore to shore was heard one cry of terrible defiance, and the different classes and orders of this manifold and mighty England were as one? Have we not heard how the mighty winds hold together as if one, the various atoms of the desert, so that they rush like a living thing across the wilderness? And this, brethren, is the unity of the Church of Christ, the subjection to the one uniting Spirit of its God.

It will be said, in reply to this, "Why, this is mere enthusiasm. It may be very beautiful in theory, but it is impossible in practice. It is mere enthusiasm to believe, that while all these varieties of conflicting opinion remain, we can have unity; it is mere enthusiasm to think that so long as men's minds reckon on a thing like unity, there can be a thing like oneness." And our reply is, Give us the Spirit of God, and we shall be one. You can not produce a unity by all the rigor of your ecclesiastical discipline. You can not produce a unity by consenting in some form of expression such as this, "Let us agree to differ." You can not produce a unity by Parliamentary regulations or enactments, bidding back the waves of what is called aggression. Give us the living Spirit of God, and we shall be one.

Once on this earth was exhibited, as it were, a specimen of perfect anticipation of such a unity, when the "rushing mighty wind" of Pentecost came down in the tongues of fire and sat on every man; when the Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, the "Cretes and Arabians," the Jew and the Gentile, each speaking one language, yet blended and fused into one unity by enthusiastic love, heard one another speak, as it were, in one language, the manifold works of God; when the spirit of giving was substituted for the spirit of mere rivalry and competition, and no man said the things he had were his own, but all shared in common. Let that spirit come again, as come it will, and come it must; and then, beneath the influences of a mightier love, we shall have a nobler and a more real unity.

We pass on now, in the second place, to consider the *individual peace* resulting from this unity. As we have endeavored to explain what is meant by unity, so now let us endeavor to understand what is meant by peace. Peace, then, is the opposite of passion, and of labor, toil, and effort. Peace is that state in which there are no desires madly demanding an impossible gratification; that state in which there is no misery, no remorse, no sting. And there are but three things which can break that peace. The first is discord between the mind of man and the lot which he is called on to inherit; the second is discord between the affections and powers of the soul; and the third is doubt of the rectitude and justice and love wherewith this world is ordered. But where these things exist not, where a man is contented with his lot, where the flesh is subdued to the spirit, and where he believes and feels with all his heart that all is right, there is peace, and to this, says the apostle, "ye are called" —the grand, peculiar call of Christianity—the call, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This was the dying bequest of Christ: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you:" and therein lies one of the greatest truths of the blessed and eternal character of Christianity, that it applies to, and satisfies the very deepest want and craving of our nature. The deepest want of man is not a desire for happiness, but a craving for peace; not a wish for the gratification of every desire, but a craving for the repose of acquiescence in the will of God; and it is this which Christianity promises. Christianity does not promise happiness, but it does promise peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," saith our Master, "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Now, let us look more closely into this peace.

The first thing we see respecting it is, that it is called God's peace. God is rest: the infinite nature of God is infinite repose. The "*I am*" of God is contrasted with the *I am become* of all other things. Every thing else is in a state of *becoming*, God is in a state of *being*. The acorn has become the plant, and the plant has become the oak. The child has become the man, and the man has become good, or wise, or whatever else it may be. God ever *is;* and I pray you once more to observe, that this peace of God, this eternal rest in the Almighty Being, arises out of His unity. Not because He is a unit, but because He is a unity. There is no discord between the powers and attributes of the mind of God; there is no discord between His justice and His love; there is no discord demanding some miserable expedient to unite them together, such as some theologians imagined when they described the sacrifice and atonement of our Redeemer by saying, it is the clever expedient whereby God reconciles His justice with His love. God's justice and love are one Infinite justice must be infinite love. Justice is but another sign of love. The infinite rest of the "*I am*" of God arises out of the harmony of His attributes.

The next thing we observe respecting this divine peace which has come down to man on earth is, that it is a *living peace.* Brethren, let us distinguish. There are several things called peace which are by no means Divine or Godlike peace. There is peace, for example, in the man who lives for and enjoys self, with no nobler aspiration goading him on to make him feel the rest of God; that is peace, but that is merely the peace of toil. There is rest on the surface of the caverned lake, which no wind can stir; but that is the peace of stagnation. There is peace amongst the stones which have fallen and rolled down the mountain's side, and lie there quietly at rest; but that is the peace of inanity. There is peace in the hearts of enemies who lie together, side by side, in the same trench of the battle-field, the animosities of their souls silenced at length, and their hands no longer clenched in deadly enmity against each other; but that is the peace of death. If our peace be but the peace of the sensualist satisfying pleasure, if it be but the peace of mental torpor and inaction, the peace of apathy, or the peace of the soul dead in trespasses and sins, we may whisper to ourselves, "Peace, peace," but there will be no peace; *there* is not the peace of unity nor the peace of God, for the peace of God is the living peace of love.

The next thing we observe respecting this peace is, that it is the manifestation of power—it is the peace which comes from an inward power: "Let the peace of God," says the apostle, "rule within your hearts." For it is a power, the manifestation of strength. There is no peace except there is the possibility of the opposite of peace, although now restrained and controlled. You do not speak of the peace of a grain of sand, because it can not be otherwise than merely insignificant, and at rest. You do not speak of the peace of a mere pond; you speak of the peace of the sea, because there is the opposite of peace implied, there is power and strength. And this, brethren, is the real character of the peace in the mind and soul of man. Oh! we make a great mistake when we say there is strength in passion, in the exhibition of emotion. Passion, and emotion, and all those outward manifestations, prove, not strength, but weakness. If the passions of a man are strong, it proves the man himself is weak if he can not restrain or control his passions. The real strength and majesty of the soul of man is calmness, the manifestation of strength; "the peace of God" ruling; the word of Christ saying to the inward storms, "Peace!" and there is "a great calm."

Lastly, the peace of which the apostle speaks is the peace that is received—the peace of reception. You will observe, throughout this passage the apostle speaks of a something received, and not done: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." It is throughout receptive, but by no means inactive. And according to this, there are two kinds of peace; the peace of obedience—"Let the peace of God rule" you; and there is the peace of gratefulness—"Be ye thankful." Very great, brethren, is the peace of obedience: when a man has his lot fixed, and his mind made up, and he sees his destiny before him, and quietly acquiesces in it, his spirit is at rest. Great and deep is the peace of the soldier to whom has been assigned even an untenable position, with the command, "Keep that, even if you die," and he obediently remains to die.

Great was the peace of Elisha—very, very calm are those words by which he expressed his acquiescence in the Divine will. "Knowest thou," said the troubled, excited, and restless men around him—"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" He answered, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." Then there is the other peace, it is the peace of gratefulness: "Be ye thankful." It is that peace which the Israelites had when these words were spoken to them on the shores of the Red Sea, while the bodies of their enemies floated past them, destroyed, but not by them: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

And here, brethren, is another mistake of ours: we look on salvation as a thing to be done, and not received. In God's salvation we can do but little, but there is a great deal to be received. We are here, not merely to act, but to be acted upon. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts;" there is a peace that will enter there, if you do not thwart it; there is a Spirit that will take possession of your soul, provided that you do not quench it. In this world we are recipients, not creators. In obedience and in gratefulness, and the infinite peace of God in the soul of man, is alone to be found deep calm repose.

XII.

THE CHRISTIAN AIM AND MOTIVE.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. v. 48.

There are two erroneous views held respecting the character of the Sermon on the Mount. The first may be called an error of worldly-minded men, the other an error of mistaken religionists. Worldly-minded men—men, that is, in whom the devotional feeling is but feeble—are accustomed to look upon morality as the whole of religion; and they suppose that the Sermon on the Mount was designed only to explain and enforce correct principles of morality. It tells of human duties and human proprieties, and an attention to these, they maintain, is the only religion which is required by it. Strange, my Christian brethren, that men whose lives are least remarkable for superhuman excellence, should be the very men to refer most frequently to those sublime comments on Christian principle, and should so confidently conclude from thence, that themselves are right and all others are wrong. Yet so it is.

The other is an error of mistaken religionists. They sometimes regard the Sermon on the Mount as if it were a collection of moral precepts, and consequently, strictly speaking, not Christianity at all. To them it seems as if the chief value, the chief intention of the discourse, was to show the breadth and spirituality of the requirements of the law of Moses; its chief religious significance, to show the utter impossibility of fulfilling the law, and thus to lead to the necessary inference that justification must be by faith alone. And so they would not scruple to assert that, in the highest sense of that term, it is not Christianity at all, but only preparatory to it—a kind of spiritual Judaism; and that the higher and more developed principles of Christianity are to be found in the writings of the apostles. Before we proceed further, we would remark here that it seems extremely startling to say that He who came to this world expressly to preach the Gospel, should, in the most elaborate of all His discourses, omit to do so: it is indeed something more than startling, it is absolutely revolting, to suppose that the letters of those who spoke *of* Christ, should contain a more perfectly-developed, a freer and fuller Christianity than is to be found in Christ's own words.

Now you will observe that these two parties, so opposed to each other in their general religious views, are agreed in this—that the Sermon on the Mount is nothing but morality. The man of the world says—"It is morality only, and that is the whole of religion." The mistaken religionist says—"It is morality only, not the entire essence of Christianity." In opposition to both these views, we maintain that the Sermon on the Mount contains the sum and substance of Christianity—the very chief matter of the Gospel of our Redeemer.

It is not, you will observe, a pure and spiritualized Judaism; it is contrasted with Judaism again and again by Him who spoke it. Quoting the words of Moses, He affirmed, "So was it spoken by them of old time, but *I say unto you*—" For example, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." That is Judaism. "But I say unto you, Swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay." That is Christianity. And that which is the essential peculiarity of this Christianity lies in these two things. First of all, that the morality which it teaches is *disinterested* goodness—goodness not for the sake of the blessing that follows it, but for its own sake, and because it is right. "Love your enemies," is the Gospel precept. Why?—Because if you love them you shall be blessed; and if you do not, cursed? No; but "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of"—that is, may be like—"your Father which is in heaven." The second essential peculiarity of Christianity—and this, too, is an essential peculiarity of this sermon, is that it teaches and enforces the law of self-sacrifice. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." This, brethren, is the law of self-sacrifice—the very law and spirit of the blessed cross of Christ.

How deeply and essentially Christian, then, this Sermon on the Mount is, we shall understand if we are enabled in any measure to reach the meaning and spirit of the single passage which I have taken as my text. It tells two things—the Christian aim and the Christian motive.

I. The Christian aim—perfection.

II. The Christian motive—because it is right and Godlike to be perfect.

I. The Christian aim is this—to be perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect." Now distinguish this, I pray you, from mere worldly morality. It is not conformity to a creed that is here required, but aspiration after a *state.* It is not demanded of us to perform a number of duties, but to yield obedience to a certain spiritual law. But let us endeavor to explain this more fully. What is the meaning of this expression, "Be ye perfect?" Why is it that in this discourse, instead of being commanded to perform religious duties, we are commanded to think of being like God? Will not that inflame our pride, and increase our natural vainglory? Now the nature and possibility of human perfection, what it is and how it is possible, are both contained in one single expression in the text, "Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The relationship between father and son implies consanguinity, likeness, similarity of character and nature. God *made* the insect, the stone, the lily, but God is not the Father of the caterpillar, the lily, or the stone.

When, therefore, God is said to be our Father, something more is implied in this than that God created man. And so when the Son of Man came proclaiming the fact that we are the children of God it was in the truest sense a revelation. He told us that the nature of God resembles the nature of man, that love in God is not a mere figure of speech, but means the same thing as love in us, and that Divine anger is the same thing as human anger divested of its emotions and imperfections. When we are commanded to be like God, it implies that God has that nature of which we have already the germs. And this has been taught by the incarnation of the Redeemer. Things absolutely dissimilar in their nature can not mingle. Water can not coalesce with fire—water can not mix with oil. If, then, humanity and divinity were united in the person of the Redeemer, it follows that there must be something kindred between the two, or else the incarnation had been impossible. So that the incarnation is the realization of man's perfection.

But let us examine more deeply this assertion, that *our* nature is kindred with that of God—for if man has not a nature kindred to God's, then a demand such as that, "Be ye the children of"—that is, like—"God," is but a mockery of man. We say, then, in the first place, that in the truest sense of the word man can be a creator. The beaver *makes* its hole, the bee *makes* its cell; man alone has the power of *creating*. The mason *makes*, the architect *creates*. In the same sense that we say God created the universe, we say that man is also a creator. The creation of the universe was the Eternal Thought taking reality. And thought taking expression is also a creation. Whenever, therefore, there is a living thought shaping itself in word or in stone, there is there a creation. And therefore it is that the simplest effort of what we call genius is prized infinitely more than the most elaborate performances which are done by mere workmanship, and for this reason: that the one is produced by an effort of power which we share with the beaver and the bee, that of *making*, and the other by a faculty and power which man alone shares with God.

Here, however, you will observe another difficulty. It will be said at once, There is something in this comparison of man with God which looks like blasphemy, because one is finite and the other infinite—man is bounded, God boundless; and to speak of resemblance and kindred between these two, is to speak of resemblance and kindred between two natures essentially different. But this is precisely the argument which is brought by the Socinians against the doctrine of the incarnation; and we are bound to add that the Socinian argument is right, unless there be the similarity of which we have been speaking. Unless there be something in man's nature which truly and properly partakes of the Divine nature, there could be no incarnation, and the demand for perfection would be a mockery and an impossibility.

Let us then endeavor to find out the evidences of this infinitude in the nature of man. First of all, we find it in this —that the desires of man are for something boundless and unattainable. Thus speaks our Lord—"What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Every schoolboy has heard the story of the youthful prince who enumerated one by one the countries he meant to conquer year after year; and when the enumeration was completed, was asked what he meant to do when all those victories were achieved, and he replied, To sit down, to be happy, to take his rest. But then came the ready rejoinder, Why not do so now? But it is not every schoolboy who has paused to consider the folly of the question. He who asked his son why he did not at once take the rest which it was his ultimate purpose to enjoy, knew not the immensity and nobility of the human soul. He could not *then* take his rest and be happy. As long as one realm remained unconquered, so long rest was impossible; he would weep for fresh worlds to conquer. And thus, that which was spoken by our Lord of one earthly gratification, is true of all—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." The boundless, endless, infinite void in the soul of man can be satisfied with nothing but God. Satisfaction lies not in *having*, but in *being*. There is no satisfaction even in *doing*. Man can not be satisfied with his own performances. When the righteous young ruler came to Christ, and declared that in reference to the life gone by he had kept all the commandments and fulfilled all the duties required by the law, still came the question—"What lack I yet?"

The Scribes and Pharisees were the strictest observers of the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, "touching the righteousness which is by the law" they were blameless, but yet they wanted something more than that, and they were found on the brink of Jordan imploring the baptism of John, seeking after a new and higher state than they had yet attained to—a significant proof that man can not be satisfied with his own works. And again, there is not one of us who has ever been satisfied with his own performances. There is no man whose doings are worth any thing, who has not felt that he has not yet done that which he feels himself able to do. While he was doing it, he was kept up by the spirit of hope; but when done the thing seemed to him worthless. And therefore it is that the author can not read his own book again, nor the sculptor look with pleasure upon his finished work. With respect to one of the greatest of all modern sculptors, we are told that he longed for the termination of his earthly career, for this reason—that he had been satisfied with his own performance: satisfied for the first time in his life. And this expression of his satisfaction was but equivalent to saying that he had reached the goal beyond which there could be no progress. This impossibility of being satisfied with his own performances is one of the strongest proofs of our immortality—a proof of that perfection towards which we shall forever tend, but which we can never attain.

A second trace of this infinitude in man's nature we find in the infinite capacities of the soul. This is true intellectually and morally. With reference to our intellectual capacities, it would perhaps be more strictly correct to say that they are indefinite, rather than infinite; that is, we can affix to them no limit. For there is no man, however low his intellectual powers may be, who has not at one time or another felt a rush of thought, a glow of inspiration, which seemed to make all things possible, as if it were merely the effect of some imperfect organization which stood in the way of his doing whatever he desired to do. With respect to our moral and spiritual capacities, we remark that they are not only indefinite, but absolutely infinite. Let that man answer who has ever truly and heartily loved another. That man knows what it is to partake of the infinitude of God. Literally, in the emphatic language of the Apostle John, he has felt his immortality—"God in him, and he in God." For that moment, infinitude was to him not a name, but a reality. He entered into the infinite of time and space, which is not measured by days, or months, or years, but is alike boundless and eternal.

Again: we perceive a third trace of this infinitude in man, in the power which he possesses of giving up self. In this, perhaps more than in any thing else, man may claim kindred with God. Nor is this power confined to the best of mankind, but is possessed, to some extent at least, by all. There is no man, how low soever he may be, who has not one or two causes or secrets, which no earthly consideration would induce him to betray. There is no man who does not feel towards one or two at least, in this world, a devotion which all the bribes of the universe would not be able to shake. We have heard the story of that degraded criminal who, when sentence of death was passed upon him, turned to his accomplice in guilt, in whose favor a verdict of acquittal was brought in, and in glorious self-forgetfulness exclaimed—"Thank God, *you* are saved!" The savage and barbarous Indian, whose life has been one unbroken series of cruelty and crime, will submit to a slow, lingering, torturing death, rather than betray his country. Now, what shall we say to these things? Do they not tell of an indestructible something in the nature of man, of which the origin is Divine?—the remains of a majesty which, though it may be sullied, can never be entirely lost?

Before passing on let us observe, that were it not for this conviction of the Divine origin, and consequent perfectibility of our nature, the very thought of God would be painful to us. God is so great, so glorious, that the mind is overwhelmed by, and shrinks from, the contemplation of His excellence, unless there comes the tender, ennobling thought that we are the children of God, who are to become like our Father in heaven, whose blessed career it is to go on in an advance of love and duty towards Him, until we love Him as we are loved, and know Him almost as we are known.

II. We pass on, in the second place, to consider the Christian motive—"Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Brethren, worldly prudence, miscalled morality, says—"Be honest; you will find your gain in being so. Do right; you will be the better for it—even in this world you will not lose by it." The mistaken religionist only magnifies this on a large scale. "Your duty," he says, "is to save your soul. Give up this world to have the next. Lose *here*, that you may gain *hereafter*." Now this is but prudence, after all—it is but magnified selfishness, carried on into eternity—none the more noble for being *eternal* selfishness. In opposition to all such sentiments as these, thus speaks the Gospel—"Be ye perfect." Why? "Because your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Do right, because it is God-like and right so to do. Here, however, let us be understood. We do not mean to say that the Gospel ignores altogether the personal results of doing right. This would be unnatural—because God has linked together well-doing and blessedness. But we do say that this blessedness is not the motive which the Gospel gives us. It is true the Gospel says —"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But when these are made our motives—when we become meek in order that we may inherit here—then the promised enjoyment will not come. If we are merciful merely that we may ourselves obtain mercy, we shall not have that indwelling love of God which is the result and token of His forgiveness. Such was the law and such the example of our Lord and Master.

True it is that in the prosecution of the great work of redemption He had "respect to the recompense of reward." True it is He was conscious—how could He but be conscious—that when His work was completed He should be "glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before the world began;" but we deny that this was the *motive* which induced Him to undertake that work; and that man has a very mistaken idea of the character of the Redeemer, and understands but little of His spirit, who has so mean an opinion of Him as to suppose that it was any consideration of personal happiness and blessedness which led the Son of God to die. "For this end was He born, and for this end came He into the world to bear witness unto the truth," and "to finish the work which was given Him to do."

If we were asked, Can you select one text in which more than in any other this unselfish, disinterested feature comes forth, it should be this, "Love ye your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." This is the true spirit of Christianity—doing right disinterestedly, not from the hope of any personal advantage or reward, either temporal or spiritual, but entirely forgetting self, "hoping for nothing again." When that glorious philanthropist, whose whole life had been spent in procuring the abolition of the slave-trade, was demanded of, by some systematic theologian, whether in his ardor in this great cause he had not been neglecting his personal prospects and endangering his own soul, this was his magnanimous reply—one of those which show the light of truth breaking through like an inspiration: he said, "I did not think about my own soul, I had no time to think about myself, I had forgotten all about my soul." The Christian is not concerned about his own happiness; he has not time to consider himself; he has not time to put that selfish question which the disciples put to their Lord when they were but half baptized with His spirit, "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?"

In conclusion we observe, there are two things which are to be learned from this passage. The first is this, that happiness is not our end and aim. It has been said, and has since been repeated as frequently as if it were an indisputable axiom, that "happiness is our being's end and aim." Brethren, happiness is *not* our being's end and aim. The Christian's aim is perfection, not happiness, and every one of the sons of God must have something of that spirit which marked their Master; that holy sadness, that peculiar unrest, that high and lofty melancholy which belongs to a spirit which strives after heights to which it can never attain.

The second thing we have to learn is this, that on this earth there can be no rest for man. By rest we mean the attainment of a state beyond which there can be no change. Politically, morally, spiritually, there can be no rest for man here. In one country alone has that system been fully carried out which, conservative of the past, excludes all desire of progress and improvement for the future: but it is not to China that we should look for the perfection of human society. There is one ecclesiastical system which carries out the same spirit, looking rather to the Church of the past than to the Church of the future; but it is not in the Romish that we shall find the model of a Christian Church. In Paradise it may have been right to be at rest, to desire no change; but ever since the Fall, every system that tends to check the onward progress of mankind is fatally, radically, curelessly wrong. The motto on every Christian banner is "Forward." There is no resting in the present, no satisfaction in the past.

The last thing we learn from this is the impossibility of obtaining that of which some men speak—the satisfaction of a good conscience. Some men write and speak as if the difference between the Christian and the worldly man was this, that in the one conscience is a self-reproaching hell, and in the other a self-congratulating heaven. Oh, brethren, is this the fact? Think you that the Christian goes home at night counting up the noble deeds done during the day, saying to himself, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Brethren, that habit of looking forward to the future prevents all pride and self-righteousness, and makes our best and only rest and satisfaction to consist in contemplating the future which is bringing us nearer and nearer home. Our motto, therefore, must be that striking one of the Apostle Paul, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

XIII.

CHRISTIAN CASUISTRY.

"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.'—1 Cor. vii. 18-24.

The whole of these seven chapters of the First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, is occupied with questions of Christian casuistry. In the application of the principles of Christianity to the varying circumstances of life innumerable difficulties had arisen, and the Corinthians upon these difficulties had put certain questions to the Apostle Paul. This seventh chapter contains the apostle's answer to many of these questions. There are, however, two great divisions into which these answers generally fall. St. Paul makes a distinction between those things which he speaks by commandment and those which he speaks only by permission; there is a distinction between what he says as from the Lord, and what only from himself; between that which he speaks to them as being taught of God, and that which he speaks only as a servant, "called of the Lord and faithful."

It is manifestly plain that there are many questions in which *right* and *wrong* are not variable, but indissoluble and fixed; while there are questions, on the other hand, where these terms are not fixed, but variable, fluctuating, altering, dependent upon circumstances. As, for instance, those in which the apostle teaches in the present chapter the several duties and advantages of marriage and celibacy. There may be circumstances in which it is the duty of a Christian man to be married, there are others in which it may be his duty to remain unmarried. For instance, in the case of a missionary it may be right to be married rather than unmarried; on the other hand, in the case of a pauper, not having the wherewithal to bring up and maintain a family, it may be proper to remain unmarried. You will observe, however, that no fixed law can be laid down upon this subject. We can not say marriage is a Christian duty; nor celibacy is a Christian duty; nor that it is in every case the duty of a missionary to be married, or of a pauper to be unmarried. All these things must vary according to circumstances, and the duty must be stated not universally, but with reference to those circumstances.

These, therefore, are questions of casuistry, which depend upon the particular *case:* from which word the term "casuistry" is derived. On these points the apostle speaks not by commandment, but by permission: not as speaking by God's command, but as having the Spirit of God. A distinction has sometimes been drawn with reference to this chapter between that which the apostle speaks by inspiration, and what he speaks as a man uninspired. The distinction, however, is an altogether false one, and beside the question. For the real distinction is not between the inspired and uninspired, but between a *decision* in matters of Christian duty and *advice* in matters of Christian prudence. It is abundantly evident that God can not give advice; He can only issue a command. God can not say, "It is better to do this;" His perfections demand something absolute: "Thou shalt *do* this; thou shalt *not* do this." Whensoever, therefore, we come to advice, there is introduced the human element rather than the Divine. In all such cases, therefore, as are dependent upon circumstances the apostle speaks not as inspired, but as uninspired; as one whose judgment we have no right to find fault with or to cavil at, who lays down what is a matter of Christian prudence, and not a bounden and universal duty. The matter of the present discourse will take in various verses in this chapter—from the tenth to the twenty-fourth verse—leaving part of the commencement and the conclusion for our consideration, if God permit, next Sunday.

There are three main questions on which the apostle here gives his inspired decision. The first decision is concerning the sanctity of the marriage-bond between two Christians. His verdict is given in the tenth verse: "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." He lays down this principle, that the union is an indissoluble one.

Upon such a subject, Christian brethren, before a mixed congregation, it is manifestly evident that we can only speak in general terms. It will be sufficient to say that marriage is of all earthly unions almost the only one permitting of no change but that of death. It is that engagement in which man exerts his most awful and solemn power—the power of responsibility which belongs to him as one that shall give account—the power of abnegating the right to change—the power of parting with his freedom—the power of doing *that* which in this world can never be reversed. And yet it is perhaps that relationship which is spoken of most frivolously, and entered into most carelessly and most wantonly. It is not a union merely between two creatures, it is a union between two spirits; and the intention of that bond is to perfect the nature of both, by supplementing their deficiencies with the force of contrast, giving to each sex those excellencies in which it is naturally deficient; to the one strength of character and firmness of moral will, to the other sympathy, meekness, tenderness. And just so solemn, and just so glorious as these ends are for which the union was contemplated and intended, just so terrible are the consequences if it be perverted and abused. For there is no earthly relationship which has so much power to ennoble and to exalt. Very strong language does the apostle use in this chapter respecting it: "What knowest thou, oh wife, whether thou shalt *save* thy husband? or how knowest thou, oh man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The very power of *saving* belongs to this relationship. And on the other hand, there is no earthly relationship which has so much power to wreck and ruin the soul. For there are two rocks in this world of ours on which the soul must either anchor or be wrecked. The one is God; the other is the sex opposite to itself. The one is the "Rock of Ages," on which if the human soul anchors it lives the blessed life of faith; against which if the soul be dashed and broken, there ensues the wreck of Atheism—the worst ruin of the soul. The other rock is of another character. Blessed is the man, blessed is the woman, whose life-experience has taught a confiding belief in the excellencies of the sex opposite to their own—a blessedness second only to the blessedness of salvation. And the ruin in the other case is second only to the ruin of everlasting perdition—the same wreck and ruin of the soul.

These, then, are the two tremendous alternatives: on the one hand the possibility of securing, in all sympathy and tenderness, the laying of that step on which man rises towards his perfection; on the other hand the blight of all sympathy, to be dragged down to earth, and forced to become frivolous and commonplace; to lose all zest and earnestness in life, to have heart and life degraded by mean and perpetually-recurring sources of disagreement; these are the two alternatives, and it is the worst of these alternatives which the young risk when they form an inconsiderate union —excusably indeed, because through inexperience; and it is the worst of these alternatives which parents risk—not excusably but inexcusably—when they bring up their children with no higher view of what that tie is, than the merely prudential one of a rich and honorable marriage.

The second decision which the apostle makes respecting another of the questions proposed to him by the Corinthians is, as to the sanctity of the marriage bond between a Christian and one who is a heathen. When Christianity first entered into our world, and was little understood, it seemed to threaten the dislocation and alteration of all existing relationships. Many difficulties arose; such, for instance, as the one here started. When of two heathen parties only one was converted to Christianity, the question arose, What in this case is the duty of the Christian? Is not the duty separation? Is not the marriage in itself null and void? as if it were a union between one dead and one living? And that perpetual contact with a heathen, and therefore an enemy of God, is not that, in a relation so close and intimate, perpetual defilement? The apostle decides this with his usual inspired wisdom. He decides that the marriage bond is sacred still. Diversities of religious opinion, even the farthest and widest diversity, can not sanction separation. And so he decides in the 13th verse, "The woman which hath a husband that believeth not, if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." And, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away" (ver. 12).

Now for us in the present day the decision on this point is not of so much importance as the reason which is adduced in support of it. The proof which the apostle gives of the sanctity of the marriage is exceedingly remarkable. Practically it amounts to this: If this were no marriage, but an unhallowed alliance, it would follow as a necessary consequence that the offspring could not be reckoned in any sense as the children of God; but, on the other hand, it is the instinctive, unwavering conviction of every Christian parent, united though he or she may be to a heathen, "My child is a child of God," or, in the Jewish form of expression, "My child is *clean*." So the apostle says, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband· else were your children unclean; but now they are holy," for it follows if the children are holy in this sense of dedicated to God, and are capable of Christian relationship, then the marriage relation was not unhallowed, but sacred and indissoluble.

The value of this argument in the present day depends on its relation to baptism. The great question we are deciding in the present day may be reduced to a very few words. This question—the baptismal question—is this:—whether we are baptized because we *are* the children of God, or, whether we are the children of God because we are *baptized;* whether, in other words, when the Catechism of the Church of England says that by baptism we are "made the children of God," we are to understand thereby that we are made something which we were not before—magically and mysteriously changed; or, whether we are to understand that we are made the children of God by baptism in the same sense that a sovereign is made a sovereign by coronation. Here the apostle's argument is full, decisive, and unanswerable. He does not say that these children were Christian, or clean, because they were *baptized*, but they were the children of God because they were the children of one Christian parent; nay, more than that, such children could scarcely ever have been baptized, because, if the rite met with opposition from one of the parents, it would be an entire and perfect veto to the possibility of baptism. You will observe that the very fundamental idea out of which infant-baptism arises is, that the impression produced upon the mind and character of the child by the Christian parent makes the child one of a Christian community; and therefore, as Peter argued that Cornelius had received the Holy Ghost, and so was to be baptized, just in the same way, as they are adopted into the Christian family and receive a Christian impression, the children of Christian parents are also to be baptized.

Observe, also, the important truth which comes out collaterally from this argument—namely, the sacredness of the impression which arises from the close connection between parent and child. Stronger far than education—going on before education can commence, possibly from the very first moments of consciousness, we begin to impress ourselves on our children. Our character, voice, features, qualities—modified, no doubt, by entering into a new human being, and into a different organization—are impressed upon our children. Not the inculcation of opinions, but much rather the formation of principles, and of the tone of character, the derivation of qualities. Physiologists tell us of the derivation of the mental qualities from the father, and of the moral from the mother. But be this as it may, there is scarcely one here who can not trace back his present religious character to some impression, in early life, from one or other of his parents —a tone, a look, a word, a habit, or even, it may be, a bitter, miserable exclamation of remorse.

The third decision which the apostle gives, the third principle which he lays down, is but the development of the last. Christianity, he says, does not interfere with existing relationships. First he lays down the principle, and then unfolds the principle in two ways, ecclesiastically and civilly. The principle he lays down in almost every variety of form. In the 17th verse, "As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk." In the 20th verse, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." In the 24th verse, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." This is the principle. Christianity was not to interfere with existing relationships; Christian men were to remain in those relationships in which they were, and in them to develop the inward spirituality of the Christian life. Then he applies this principle in two ways. First of all, ecclesiastically. With respect to their church, or ecclesiastical affairs, he says —"Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any man in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised." In other words, the Jews, after their conversion, were to continue Jews, if they would. Christianity required no change in these outward things, for it was not in *these* that the depth and reality of the kingdom of Christ consisted. So the Apostle Paul took Timothy and circumcised him; so also he used all the Jewish customs with which he was familiar, and performed a vow, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, "having shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow." It was not his opinion that it was the duty of a Christian to overthrow the Jewish system. He knew that the Jewish system could not last, but what he wanted was to vitalize the system—to throw into it not a Jewish, but a Christian feeling; and so doing, he might continue in it so long as it would hold together. And so it was, no doubt, with all the other apostles. We have no evidence that before the destruction of the Jewish polity there was any attempt made by them to overthrow the Jewish external religion. They kept the Jewish sabbath, and observed the Jewish ritual. One of them, James, the Christian bishop of Jerusalem, though a Christian, was even among the Jews remarkable and honorable for the regularity with which he observed all his Jewish duties. Now let us apply this to modern duties. The great desire among men now appears to be to alter institutions, to have perfect institutions, as if *they* would make perfect men. Mark the difference between this feeling and that of the apostle, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." We are called to be members of the Church of England—what is our duty now? What would Paul have done? Is this our duty—to put such questions to ourselves as these: "Is there any single, particular sentence in the service of my Church with which I do not entirely agree? Is there any single ceremony with which my whole soul does not go along? If so, then is it my duty to leave it at once?" No, my brethren, all that we have to do is to say, "All our existing institutions are those under which God has placed us, under which we are to mould our lives according to His will." It is our duty to vitalize our forms, to throw into them a holier, deeper meaning. My Christian brethren, surely no man will get true rest, true repose for his soul, in these days of controversy, until he has learned the wise significance of these wise words—"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." He will but gain unrest, he will but disquiet himself, if he says, "I am sinning by continuing in this imperfect system," if he considers it his duty to change his calling if his opinions do not agree in every particular and special point with the system under which God has placed him.

Lastly, the apostle applies this principle civilly. And you will observe he applies it to that civil relationship which of all others was the most difficult to harmonize with Christianity—slavery. "Art thou called," he says, "being a servant? Care not for it." Now, in considering this part of the subject we should carry along with us these two recollections. First, we should recollect that Christianity had made much way among this particular class, the class of slaves. No wonder that men cursed with slavery embraced with joy a religion which was perpetually teaching the worth and dignity of the human soul, and declaring that rich and poor, peer and peasant, master and slave, were equal in the sight of God. And yet, great as this growth was, it contained within it elements of danger. It was to be feared lest men, hearing forever of brotherhood and Christian equality, should be tempted and excited to throw off the yoke by *force*, and compel their masters and oppressors to do them right.

The other fact we are to keep in remembrance is this—that all this occurred in an age in which slavery had reached its worst and most fearful form, an age in which the emperors were accustomed, not unfrequently, to feed their fish with living slaves; when captives were led to fight in the amphitheatre with wild beasts or with each other, to glut the Roman appetite for blood upon a Roman holiday. And yet, fearful as it was, the apostle says, "Care not for it." And fearful as war was in those days, when the soldiers came to John to be baptized, he did not recommend them to join some "peace association," to use the modern term; he simply exhorted them to be content with their wages.

And hence we understand the way in which Christianity was to work. It interferes indirectly and not directly with existing institutions. No doubt it will at length abolish war and slavery, but there is not one case where we find Christianity interfering with institutions, as such. Even when Onesimus ran away and came to Paul, the apostle sent him back to his master Philemon, not dissolving the connection between them. And then, as a consolation to the servant, he told him of a higher feeling—a feeling that would make him free, with the chain and shackle upon his arm. And so it was possible for the Christian then, as it is now, to be possessed of the highest liberty even under tyranny. It many times occurred that Christian men found themselves placed under an unjust and tyrannical government, and compelled to pay unjust taxes. The Son of Man showed his freedom not by refusing, but by paying them. His glorious liberty could do so without any feeling of degradation; obeying the laws, not because they were right, but because institutions are to be upheld with cordiality.

One thing in conclusion we have to observe. It is possible from all this to draw a most inaccurate conclusion. Some men have spoken of Christianity as if it was entirely indifferent about liberty and all public questions—as if with such things as these Christianity did not concern itself at all. This indifference is not to be found in the Apostle Paul. While he asserts that inward liberty is the only true liberty, he still goes on to say, "If thou mayest be free, use it rather." For he well knew that although it was possible for a man to be a high and lofty Christian even though he were a slave, yet it was not probable that he would be so. Outward institutions are necessary partly to make a perfect Christian character; and thus Christianity works from what is internal to what is external. It gave to the slave the feeling of his dignity as a man, at the same time it gave to the Christian master a new view of his relation to his slave, and taught him to regard him "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." And so by degrees slavery passed into freed servitude, and freed servitude, under God's blessing, may pass into something else.

There are two mistakes which are often made upon this subject: one is, the error of supposing that outward institutions are unnecessary for the formation of character, and the other, that of supposing that they are *all* that is required to form the human soul. If we understand rightly the duty of a Christian man, it is this: to make his brethren free inwardly and outwardly; first inwardly, so that they may become masters of themselves, rulers of their passions, having the power of self-rule and self-control; and then outwardly, so that there may be every power and opportunity of developing the inward life; in the language of the prophet, "To break the rod of the oppressor and let the oppressed go free."

XIV.

MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Cor. vii. 29–31.

The subject of our exposition last Sunday was an essential portion of this chapter. It is our duty to examine now the former and the latter portions of it. These portions are occupied entirely with the inspired apostolic decision upon this one question—the comparative advantages and merits of celibacy and marriage. One preliminary question, however, is to be discussed. How came it that such a question should be put at all to the apostle?

In the church at Corinth there were two different sections of society; first there were those who had been introduced into the church through Judaism, and afterwards those who had been converted from different forms of heathenism. Now it is well known, that it was the tendency of Judaism highly to venerate the marriage state, and just in the same proportion to disparage that of celibacy, and to place those who led a single life under a stigma and disgrace. Those converts, therefore, entered into the Church of Christ carrying with them their old Jewish prejudices. On the other hand, many who had entered into the Christian Church had been converted to Christianity from different forms of heathenism. Among these prevailed a tendency to the belief (which originated primarily in the Oriental schools of philosophy) that the highest virtue consisted in the denial of all natural inclinations, and the suppression of all natural desires; and looking upon marriage on one side only, and that the lowest, they were tempted to consider it as low, earthly, carnal, and sensual. It was at this time that Christianity entered into the world, and while it added fresh dignity and significance to the marriage relationship, it at the same time shed a splendor and a glory upon the other state. The virginity of the mother of Our Lord—the solitary life of John the Baptist—the pure and solitary youth of Christ Himself—had thrown upon celibacy a meaning and dignity which it did not possess before. No marvel, therefore, that to men so educated, and but half prepared for Christianity, practices like these should have become exaggerations; for it rarely happens that any right ideas can be given to the world without suffering exaggeration. Human nature progresses, the human mind goes on; but it is rarely in a straight line, almost always through the medium of reaction, rebounding from extremes which produce contrary extremes. So it was in the Church of Corinth. There were two opposite parties holding views diametrically opposed to one another—one honoring the married and depreciating the unmarried life—the other attributing peculiar dignity and sanctity to celibacy, and looking down with contempt upon the married Christian state.

It is scarcely necessary to remind ourselves that this diversity of sentiment has existed in the Church of Christ in almost all ages. For example, in the early ages, in almost all the writings of the Fathers we have exaggerated descriptions of the dignity and glory of the state of celibacy. They speak as if the marriage state was low, carnal, and worldly; and the other the only one in which it is possible to attain to the higher spiritual life—the one the natural state, fit for man, the other the angelic, fit for angels. But ordinarily among men in general, in every age, the state of single life has been looked down upon and contemned. And then there comes to the parties who are so circumstanced a certain sense of shame, and along with this a disposition towards calumny and slander. Let us endeavor to understand the wise, inspired decision which the Apostle Paul pronounced upon this subject. He does not decide, as we might have been led to suppose he would, from his own peculiarity of disposition, upon one side only; but raises into relief the advantages and excellencies of both. He says that neither state has in itself any *intrinsic* merit—neither is in itself superior to the other. "I suppose, then," he says, "that this is good for the present distress. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." That is, I will spare you this trouble, in recommending a single, solitary life. You will observe that in these words he attributes no intrinsic merit or dignity to either celibacy or marriage. The comparative advantages of these two states he decides with reference to two considerations; first of all with respect to their comparative power in raising the character of the individual, and afterwards with reference to the opportunities which each respectively gives for the service of God.

I. With respect to the single life, he tells us that he had his own proper gift from God; in other words, he was one of those rare characters who have the power of living without personal sympathy. The feelings and affections of the Apostle Paul were of a strange and rare character—tending to expansiveness rather than concentration. Those sympathies which ordinary men expend upon a few, he extended to many. The members of the churches which he had founded at Corinth, and Ephesus, and Colosse, and Philippi, were to him as children; and he threw upon them all that sympathy and affection which other men throw upon their own domestic circle. To a man so trained and educated, the single life gave opportunities of serving God which the marriage state could not give. St. Paul had risen at once to that philanthropy—that expansive benevolence, which most other men only attain by slow degrees, and this was made, by God's blessing, a means of serving his cause. However we may sneer at the monastic system of the Church of Rome, it is unquestionable that many great works have been done by the monks which could not have been performed by men who had entered into the marriage relationship. Such examples of heroic Christian effort as are seen in the lives of St. Bernard, of Francis Xavier, and many others, are scarcely ever to be found except in the single state. The forlorn hope in battle, as well as in the cause of Christianity, must consist of men who have no domestic relationships to divide their devotion, who will leave no wife nor children to mourn over their loss.

Let this great truth bring its improvement to those who, either of their own choice or by the force of circumstances, are destined hereafter to live a single life on earth; and, instead of yielding to that feeling so common among mankind —the feeling of envy at another's happiness; instead of becoming gloomy, and bitter, and censorious, let them remember what the Bible has to tell of the deep significance of the Virgin Mary's life—let them reflect upon the snares and difficulties from which they are saved—let them consider how much more time and money they can give to God—that they are called to the great work of serving causes, of entering into public questions, while others spend their time and talents only upon themselves. The state of single life, however we may be tempted to think lightly of it, is a state that has peculiar opportunities of deep blessedness.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul brings forward, into strong relief, the blessedness and advantages of the marriage state. He tells us that it is a type of the union between the Redeemer and the Church. But as this belongs to another part of the subject, we shall not enter into it now. But we observe, that men in general must have their sympathies drawn out step by step, little by little. We do not rise to philanthropy all at once. We begin with personal, domestic, particular affections. And not only is it true that rarely can any man have the whole of his love drawn out except through this domestic state, but, also, it is to be borne in mind that those who have entered into this relationship have also their own peculiar advantages. It is true that in the marriage-life, interrupted as it is by daily cares and small trifles, those works of Christian usefulness can not be so continuously carried on as in the other. But is there not a deep meaning to be learned from the old expression—that celibacy is an *angelic* state? that it is preternatural, and not natural? that the goodness which is induced by it is not, so to speak, the natural goodness of humanity, but such a goodness as God scarcely intended?

Who of us can not recollect a period of his history when all his time was devoted to the cause of Christ; when all his money was given to the service of God; and when we were tempted to look down upon those who were less ardent than ourselves, as if they were not Christians? But now the difficulties of life have come upon us; we have become involved in the trifles and the smallness of social domestic existence; and these have made us less devoted perhaps, less preternatural, less angelic—but more human, better fitted to enter into the daily cares and small difficulties of our ordinary humanity. And this has been represented to us by two great lives—one human, the other Divine—one, the life of John the Baptist, and the other, of Jesus Christ. In both these cases is verified the saying, that "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Those who are wisdom's children—the truly wise—will recognize an even wisdom in both these lives; they will see that there are cases in which a solitary life is to be chosen for the sake of God; while there are other cases in which a social life becomes our bounden duty.

But it should be specially observed here that *that* life which has been given to us as a specimen of life for all, was a social, a human life. Christ did not refuse to mix with the common joys and common sorrows of humanity. He was present at the marriage-feast, and by the bier of the widow's son. This, of the two lives, was the one which, because it was the most human, was the most Divine; the most rare, the most difficult, the most natural—therefore the most Christlike.

II. Let us notice, in the second place, the principle upon which the apostle founds this decision. It is given in the text—"This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none," "for the fashion of this world passeth away." Now observe here, I pray you, the deep wisdom of this apostolic decision. In point of fact it comes to this: Christianity is a spirit, not a law; it is a set of principles, not a set of rules; it is not a saying to us, You shall do this, you shall not do that; you shall use this particular dress, you shall not use that; you *shall* lead, you shall *not* lead a married life. Christianity consists of principles, but the application of those principles is left to every man's individual conscience. With respect not only to this particular case, but to all the questions which had been brought before him, the apostle applies the same principle; the cases upon which he decided were many and various, but the large, broad principle of his decision remains the same in all. You may marry, and you have not sinned; you may remain unmarried, and you do not sin; if you are invited to a heathen feast, you may go, or you may abstain from going; you may remain a slave, or you may become free; in *these things* Christianity does not consist. But what it does demand is this: that whether married or unmarried, whether a slave or free, in sorrow or in joy, you are to live in a spirit higher and loftier than that of the world.

The apostle gives us in the text two motives for this Christian unworldliness. The first motive which he lays down is this—"The time is short." You will observe how frequently, in the course of his remarks upon the questions proposed to him, the apostle turns, as it were, entirely away from the subject, as if worn out and wearied by the comparatively trivial character of the questions—as if this balancing of one earthly condition or advantage with another were but a solemn trifling compared with eternal things. And so here he seems to turn away from the question before him, and speaks of the shortness of time—"The time is short!"

Time is short in reference to two things. First, it is short in reference to the person who regards it. That mysterious thing *time*, is a matter of sensation, and not a reality; a modification merely of our own consciousness, and not actual existence; depending upon the flight of ideas—long to one, short to another. The span granted to the butterfly, the child of a single summer, may be long; that which is given to the cedar of Lebanon may be short. The shortness of time, therefore, is entirely relative—belonging to us not to God. Time is short in reference to *existence*, whether you look at it before or after. Time past seems nothing; time to come always seems long. We say this chiefly for the sake of the young. To them fifty or sixty years seems a treasure inexhaustible. But, my young brethren, ask the old man, trembling on the verge of the grave, what he thinks of time and life. He will tell you that the threescore years and ten, or even the hundred and twenty years of Jacob, are but "few and evil." And therefore if you are tempted to unbelief in respect to this question, we appeal to experience—experience alone can judge of its truth.

Once more: time is short with reference to its *opportunities.* For this is the emphatic meaning in the original—literally, "The opportunity is compressed, or shut in." Brethren, time may be long, and yet the opportunity may be very short. The sun in autumn may be bright and clear, but the seed which has not been sown until then will not vegetate. A man may have vigor and energy in manhood and maturity, but the work which ought to have been done in childhood and youth can not be done in old age. A chance once gone in this world can never be recovered.

Brother men, have you learned the meaning of yesterday? Do you rightly estimate the importance of to-day? That there are duties to be done to-day which can not be done to-morrow? This it is that throws so solemn a significance into your work. The time for working is short, therefore begin to-day; "for the night is coming when no man can work." Time is short in reference to *eternity.* It was especially with this reference that the text was written. In those days, and even by the apostles themselves, the day of the Lord's appearance and second advent seemed much nearer than it was. They believed that it would occur during their own lives. And with this belief came the feeling which comes sometimes to all. "Oh, in comparison with that vast hereafter, this little life shrivels into nothing! What is to-day worth, or its duties or its cares?" All deep minds have thought that. The thought of Time is solemn and awful to all minds in proportion to their depth—and in proportion as the mind is superficial, the thought has appeared little, and has been treated with levity. Brethren, let but a man possess himself of that thought—the deep thought of the brevity of time; this thought—that time is short, and that eternity is long—and he has learned the first great secret of unworldliness.

The second motive which the apostle gives us is the changing character of the external world. "The fashion of this world passeth away"—literally, "the *scenery* of this world," a dramatic expression, drawn from the Grecian stage. One of the deepest of modern thinkers has told us in words often quoted, "All the world's a stage." And a deeper thinker than he, because inspired, had said long before in the similar words of the text, "The *scenery* of this world passeth away."

There are two ways in which this is true. First, it is true with respect to all the things by which we are surrounded. It is only in poetry—the poetry of the Psalms for example—that the hills are called "everlasting." Go to the side of the ocean which bounds our country, and watch the tide going out, bearing with it the sand which it has worn from the cliffs; the very boundaries of our land are changing; they are not the same as they were when these words were written. Every day new relationships are forming around us; new circumstances are calling upon us to act—to act manfully, firmly, decisively, and up to the occasion, remembering that an opportunity once gone is gone forever. Indulge not in vain regrets for the past, in vainer resolves for the future—act, act in the present.

Again, this is true with respect to ourselves. "The fashion of this world passeth away" in us. The feelings we have now are not those which we had in childhood. There has passed away a glory from the earth—the stars, the sun, the moon, the green fields have lost their beauty and significance—nothing remains as it was, except their repeated impressions on the mind, the impressions of time, space, eternity, color, form; these can not alter, but all besides has changed. Our very minds alter. There is no bereavement so painful, no shock so terrible, but time will remove or alleviate. The keenest feeling in this world time wears out at last, and our minds become like old monumental tablets which have lost the inscription once graven deeply upon them.

In conclusion, we have to examine the nature of this Christian unworldliness which is taught us in the text. The principle of unworldliness is stated in the latter portion of the text; in the former part the apostle makes an application of the principle to four cases of life. First, to cases of domestic relationship—"it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none." Secondly, to cases of sorrow—"and they that weep as though they wept not." Thirdly, to cases of joy—"and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." And, finally, to cases of the acquisition of worldly property—"and they that buy as though they possessed not." Time will not allow us to go into these applications; we must confine ourselves to a brief consideration of the principle. The principle of Christian unworldliness, then, is this, to "use this world as not abusing it." Here Christianity takes its stand in opposition to two contrary principles. The spirit of the world says, "Time is short, therefore use it while you have it; take your fill of pleasure while you may." A narrow religion says, "Time is short, therefore temporal things should receive no attention: do not weep, do not rejoice; it is beneath a Christian." In opposition to the narrow spirit of religion, Christianity says, "*Use* this world;"—in opposition to the spirit of the world Christianity says, "Do not *abuse* it." A distinct duty arises from this principle to use the world. While in the world we are citizens of the world: it is our *duty* to share its joys, to take our part in its sorrows, not to shrink from its difficulties, but to mix ourselves with its infinite opportunities. So that if time be short, so far from that fact lessening their dignity or importance, it infinitely increases them; since upon these depend the destinies of our eternal being. Unworldliness is this—to hold things from God in the perpetual conviction that they will not last; to have the world, and not to let the world have us; to be the world's masters, and not the world's slaves.

XV.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH A FAMILY.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."—Eph. iii. 14, 15.

In the verses immediately before the text the Apostle Paul has been speaking of what he calls a mystery—that is, a revealed secret. And the secret was this, that the Gentiles would be "fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel." It had been kept secret from the former ages and generations; it was a secret which the Jew had not suspected, had not even dreamt of. It appeared to him to be his duty to keep as far as possible from the Gentile. Circumcision, which taught him the duty of separation from the Gentile spirit and Gentile practices, seemed to him to teach hatred towards Gentile *persons*, until at length, in the good pleasure and providence of God, in the fullness of time, through the instrumentality of men whose *hearts* rather than whose intellects were inspired by God, the truth came out distinct and clear, that God was the Father of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

In the progress of the months, my Christian brethren, we have arrived again at that period of the year in which our Church calls upon us to commemorate the Epiphany, or manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and we know not that in the whole range of Scripture we could find a passage which more distinctly and definitely than this brings before us the spirit in which it is incumbent upon us to enter upon this duty, In considering this passage we shall divide it into these two branches:

I. The definition which the Apostle Paul here gives of the Church of Christ; and,

II. The name by which this Church is named.

I. In the first place, let us consider the definition given by the Apostle Paul of the Christian Church, taken in its entirety. It is this, "the whole family in heaven and earth." But in order to understand this fully, it will be necessary for us to break it up into its different terms.

1. First of all, it is taught by this definition that the

Church of Christ is a society founded upon natural affinities—a "family." A family is built on affinities which are natural, not artificial; it is not a combination, but a society. In ancient times an association of interest combined men in one guild or corporation for protecting the common persons in that corporation from oppression. In modern times identity of political creed or opinion has bound men together in one league, in order to establish those political principles which appeared to them of importance. Similarity of taste has united men together in what is called an association, or a society, in order by this means to attain more completely the ends of that science to which they had devoted themselves. But as these have been raised artificially, so their end is, inevitably, dissolution. Society passes on, and guilds and corporations die; principles are established, and leagues become dissolved; tastes change, and then the association or society breaks up and comes to nothing.

It is upon another principle altogether that that which we call a family, or true society, is formed. It is not built upon similarity of taste, nor identity of opinion, but upon affinities of nature. You do not *choose* who shall be your brother; you can not exclude your mother or your sister; it does not depend upon choice or arbitrary opinion at all, but is founded upon the eternal nature of things. And precisely in the same way is the Christian Church formed—upon natural affinity, and not upon artificial combination. "The family, the whole family in heaven and earth;" not made up of those who *call* themselves brethren, but of those who *are* brethren; not founded merely upon the principles of combination, but upon the principles of affinity. That is not a church, or a family, or a society which is made up by men's choice, as when, in the upper classes of life, men of fashion unite together, selecting their associates from their own *class*, and form what is technically called a society; it is a combination, if you will, but a society it is not—a family it is not—a Church of Christ it can not be.

And, again, when the Baptists or the Independents, or any other sectarians, unite themselves with men holding the same faith and entertaining the same opinions, there may be a *sect*, a *combination*, a *persuasion*, but a *Church* there can not be. And so, again, when the Jew in time past linked himself with the Jew, with those of the same nation, there you have what in ancient times was called Judaism, and in modern times is called Hebraicism—a system, a combination, but not a Church. The Church rises ever out of the family. First of all, in the good providence of God, there is the family. then the tribe, then the nation; and then the nation merges itself into humanity. And the nation which refuses to merge its nationality in humanity, to lose itself in the general interests of mankind, is left behind, and loses almost its religious nationality—like the Jewish people.

Such is the first principle. A man is born of the same family, and is not made such by an appointment or by arbitrary choice.

2. Another thing which is taught by this definition is this, that the Church of Christ is a whole made up of manifold diversities. We are told here it is "the *whole* family," taking into it the great and good of ages past, now in heaven; and also the struggling, the humble, and the weak now existing upon earth. Here, again, the analogy holds good between the Church and the family. Never more than in the family is the true entirety of our nature seen. Observe how all the diversities of human condition and character manifest themselves in the family.

First of all, there are the two opposite poles of masculine and feminine, which contain within them the entire of our humanity—which together, not separately, make up the whole of man. Then there are the diversities in the degrees and kinds of affection. For when we speak of family affection we must remember that it is made up of many diversities. There is nothing more different than the love which the sister bears towards the brother, compared with that which the brother bears towards the sister. The affection which a man bears towards his father is quite distinct from that which he feels towards his mother; it is something quite different towards his sister; totally diverse again, towards his brother.

And then there are diversities of character. First the mature wisdom and stern integrity of the father; then the exuberant tenderness of the mother. And then one is brave and enthusiastic, another thoughtful, and another tender. One is remarkable for being full of rich humor, another is sad, mournful, even melancholy. Again, besides these, there are diversities of condition in life. First, there is the heir, sustaining the name and honor of the family; then perchance the soldier, in whose career all the anxiety and solicitude of the family is centred; then the man of business, to whom they look up, trusting his advice, expecting his counsel; lastly, perhaps, there is the invalid, from the very cradle trembling between life and death, drawing out all the sympathies and anxieties of each member of the family, and so uniting them all more closely, from their having one common point of sympathy and solicitude. Now, you will observe that these are not accidental, but absolutely essential to the idea of a family; for so far as any one of them is lost, so far the family is incomplete. A family made up of one sex alone, all brothers and no sisters; or in which all are devoted to one pursuit; or in which there is no diversity of temper and dispositions—the same monotonous repeated identity—a sameness in the type of character—this is not a family, it is only the fragment of a family.

And precisely in the same way all these diversities of character and condition are necessary to constitute and complete the idea of a Christian Church. For as in ages past it was the delight of the Church to canonize one particular class of virtues—as for instance, purity or martyrdom—so now, in every age, and in every individual bosom, there is a tendency to canonize, or honor, or reckon as Christian, only one or two classes of Christian qualities. For example, if you were to ask in the present day where you should find a type of the Christian character, many in all probability would point you to the man who keeps the sabbath-day, is regular in his attendance upon the services of the Church, who loves to hear the Christian sermon. This is a phase of Christian character—that which is essentially and peculiarly the *feminine* type of religion. But is there in God's Church to be found no place for that type which is rather masculine than feminine?—which not in litanies or in psalm-singing does the will of God, but by struggling for principles, and contending for the truth—*that* life whose prayer is action, whose aspiration is continual effort?

Or again, in every age, amongst all men, in the history of almost every individual, at one time or another, there has been a tendency towards that which has been emphatically named in modern times *hero-worship*—leading us to an admiration of the more singular, powerful, noble qualities of humanity. And wherever this tendency to hero-worship exists, there will be found side by side with it a tendency to undervalue and depreciate excellences of an opposite character—the humble, meek, retiring qualities. But it is precisely for these that the Church of Christ finds place. "Blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are the poor in spirit." In God's world there is a place for the wren and the violet, just as truly as there is for the eagle and the rose. In the Church of God there is a place—and that the noblest—for Dorcas making garments for the poor, and for Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, just as truly as there is for Elijah confounding a false religion by his noble opposition, for John the Baptist making a king tremble on his throne, or for the Apostle Paul "compassing sea and land" by his wisdom and his heroic deeds.

Once more, there are ages as well as times in our own individual experience, when we set up charity as if it were the one only Christian character. And wherever this tendency is found there will be found at the same time, and side by side with it, a tendency to admire the spurious form of charity, which is a sentiment and not a virtue; which can sympathize with crime, but not with law; which can be tender to savages, but has no respect, no care for national honor. And therefore does this principle of the Apostle Paul call upon us to esteem also another form or type of character, and the opposite one; that which is remarkable for—in which predominates—not so much charity as *justice;* that which was seen in the warriors and prophets of old; who, perchance, had a more strong recoil from vice than sympathy with virtue; whose indignation towards that which is wrong and hypocritical was more intense than their love for that which is good: the material, the character, out of which the reformer and the prophet, those who are called to do great works on earth, are made.

The Church of Christ takes not in one individual form of goodness merely, but every form of excellence that can adorn humanity. Nor is this wonderful when we remember who He was from whom this Church was named. It was He in whom centred all excellence—a righteousness which was entire and perfect. But when we speak of the perfection of righteousness, let us remember that it is made not of one exaggerated character, but of a true harmony, a due proportion of all virtues united. In Him were found, therefore, that tenderness towards sinners which had no sympathy with sin; that humility which could be dignified, and was yet united with self-respect; that simplicity which is ever to be met with side by side with true majesty; that love which could weep over Jerusalem at the very moment when He was pronouncing its doom; that truth and justice which appeared to stand as a protection to those who had been oppressed, at the same time that He scathed with indignant invective the Pharisees of the then existing Jews.

There are two, only two *perfect* humanities. One has existed already in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the other is to be found only in the collective Church. Once, only once, has God given a perfect representation of Himself, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." And if we ask again for a perfect humanity, the answer is, it is not in this Church or in that Church, or in this man or in that man, in this age or in that age, but in the collective blended graces, and beauties, and humanities, which are found in every age, in all churches, but not in every separate man. So, at least, Paul has taught us, "Till we *all* come"—*collectively*, not separately—"in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man"—in other words, to a perfect *humanity*—"unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

3. The last thing which is taught us by this definition is, that the Church of Christ is a society which is forever shifting its locality and altering its forms. It is the *whole* church, "the *whole* family in heaven and earth." So, then, those who were on earth, and are now in heaven, are yet members of the same family still. Those who had their home here, now have it there.

Let us see what it is that we should learn from this doctrine. It is this, that the dead are not lost to us. There is a sense in which the departed are ours more than they were before. There is a sense in which the Apostles Paul or John, the good and great of ages past, belong to this age more than to that in which they lived, but in which they were not understood; in which the commonplace and every-day part of their lives hindered the brightness and glory and beauty of their character from shining forth. So it is in the family. It is possible for men to live in the same house, and partake of the same meal from day to day, and from year to year, and yet remain strangers to each other, mistaking each other's feelings, not comprehending each other's character; and it is only when the Atlantic rolls between, and half a hemisphere is interposed, that we learn how dear they are to us, how all our life is bound up in deep anxiety with their existence. Therefore it is the Christian feels that the family is not broken. Think you that family can break or end?—that because the chair is empty, therefore he, your child, is no more? It may be so with the coarse, the selfish, the unbelieving, the superstitious; but the eye of faith sees there only a transformation. He is not there, he is risen. You see the place where he was, but he has passed to heaven. So at least the parental heart of David felt of old, "by faith and not by sight," when speaking of his infant child. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Once more, the Church of Christ is a society ever altering and changing its external forms. "The *whole* family"—the Church of the patriarchs, and of ages before them; and yet the same family. Remember, I pray you, the diversities of form through which, in so many ages and generations, this Church has passed. Consider the difference there was between the patriarchal Church of the time of Abraham and Isaac, and its condition under David; or the difference between the Church so existing and its state in the days of the apostles; and the marvellous difference between that and the same Church four or five centuries later; or, once again, the difference between that, externally one, and the Church as it exists in the present day, broken into so many fragments. Yet diversified as these states may be, they are not more so than the various stages of a family.

There is a time when the children are all in one room, around their mother's knee. Then comes a time, still farther on, when the first separation takes place, and some are leaving their home to prepare for after-life. Afterwards, when all in their different professions, trades or occupations, are separate At last comes the time when some are gone. And, perchance, the two survivors meet at last—an old, gray-haired man, and a weak, worn-out woman—to mourn over the last graves of a household. Christian brethren, which ot these is the right form—the true, external pattern of a family? Say we not truly, it remains the same under all outward mutations? We must think of this, or else we may lose heart in our work. Conceive, for instance, the feelings of a pious Jew, when Christianity entered this world; when all his religious system was broken up—the Temple-service brought to a violent end; when that polity which he thought was to redeem and ennoble the world was cast aside as a broken and useless thing. Must they not have been as gloomy and as dreary as those of the disciples, when He was dead who they "trusted should have redeemed Israel?" In both cases the body was gone or was altered—the spirit had arisen.

And precisely so it is with our fears and unbelieving apprehensions now. Institutions pass — churches alter — old forms change — and high-minded and good men cling to these as if *they* were the only things by which God could regenerate the world. Christianity appears to some men to be effete and worn out. Men who can look back upon the times of Venn, and Newton, and Scott—comparing the degeneracy of their descendants with the men of those days—lose heart as if all things were going wrong. "Things are not," they say, "as they were in our younger days." No, my Christian brethren, things are not as they then were; but the Christian cause lives on—not in the successors of such men as those; the outward form is altered, but the spirit is elsewhere, is risen—risen just as truly as the spirit of the highest Judaism rose again in Christianity. And to mourn over old superstitions and effete creeds is just as unwise as is the grief of the mother mourning over the form which was once her child. She can not separate her affection from that form—those hands, those limbs, those features—are they not her child? The true answer is, her child is not there. It is only the form of her child. And it is as unwise to mourn over the decay of those institutions—the change of human forms—as it was unwise in Jonah to mourn with that passionate sorrow over the decay of the gourd which had sheltered him from the heat of the noontide sun. A worm had eaten the root of the gourd, and it was gone. But He who made the gourd the shelter to the weary—the shadow of those who are oppressed by the noontide heat of life—lived on: Jonah's God. And so, brethren, all things change—all things outward change and alter; but the God of the Church lives on. The Church of God remains under fresh forms—the one, holy, entire family in heaven and earth.

II. Pass we on now, in the second place, to consider the name by which this Church is named. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," the Apostle says, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

Now, every one familiar with the Jewish modes of thought and expression will allow here that *name* is but another word to express being, actuality, and existence. So when Jacob desired to know the character and nature of Jehovah, he said—"Tell me now, I beseech thee, thy *name*." When the Apostle here says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is *named*," it is but another way of saying that it is He on whom the Church depends—who has given it substantive existence—without whom it could not be at all. It is but another way of saying what he has expressed elsewhere—"that there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved." Let us not lose ourselves in vague generalities. Separate from Christ, there is no salvation; there can be no Christianity. Let us understand what we mean by this. Let us clearly define and enter into the meaning of the words we use. When we say that our Lord Jesus Christ is He "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," we mean that the very being of the Church depends on Christ—that it could not be without Him. Now, the Church of Christ depends upon these three things—first, the recognition of a common Father; secondly, of a common humanity; and thirdly, of a common sacrifice.

1. First, the recognition of a common Father. That is the sacred truth proclaimed by the Epiphany. God revealed in Christ—not the Father of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile. The Father of a "whole family." Not the partial Father loving one alone—the elder—but the younger son besides: the outcast prodigal who had spent his living with harlots and sinners, but the child still, and the child of a Father's love. Our Lord taught this in His own blessed prayer—"*Our* Father;" and as we lose the meaning of that single word *our*, as we say *my* Father—the Father of *me* and of *my* faction—of *me* and *my* fellow-believers—*my* Anglicanism or *my* Judaism—be it what it may—instead of *our* Father—the Father of the outcasts, the profligate, of all who choose to claim a Father's love; *so* we lose the meaning of the lesson which the Epiphany was designed to teach, and the possibility of building up a family to God.

2. The recognition of a common humanity. He from whom the Church is named, took upon Him not the nature merely of the noble, of kings, or of the intellectual philosopher—but of the beggar, the slave, the outcast, the infidel, the sinner, and the nature of every one struggling in various ways. Let us learn then, brother men, that we shall have no family in God, unless we learn the deep truth of our common humanity, shared in by the servant and the sinner, as well as the sovereign. Without this we shall have no Church—no family in God.

3. Lastly, the Church of Christ proceeds out of, and rests upon, the belief in a common sacrifice.

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There are three ways in which the human race hitherto has endeavored to construct itself into a family; first, by the sword; secondly, by an ecclesiastical system; and thirdly, by trade or commerce. First, by the sword. The Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman, have done their work—in itself a most valuable and important one; but so far as the formation of mankind into a family was the object aimed at, the work of the sword has done almost nothing. Then there was the ecclesiastical system—the grand attempt of the Church of Rome to organize all men into one family, with an ecclesiastical, visible, earthly head. Being Protestants, it is not necessary for us to state our conviction that this attempt has been a signal and complete failure. We now come to the system of commerce and trade. We are told that that which chivalry and honor could not do—which an ecclesiastical system could not do—personal interest *will* do. Trade is to bind men together into one family. When they feel it their *interest* to be one, they will be brothers. Brethren, that which is built on selfishness can not stand. The system of personal interest must be shivered into atoms. Therefore, we, who have observed the ways of God in the past, are waiting in quiet but awful expectation until He shall confound this system as He has confounded those which have gone before. And it may be effected by convulsions more terrible and more bloody than the world has yet seen. While men are talking of peace, and of the great progress of civilization, there is heard in the distance the noise of armies gathering rank on rank: east and west, north and south, are rolling towards us the crushing thunders of universal war.

Therefore there is but one other system to be tried, and that is the cross of Christ—a system that is not to be built upon selfishness, nor upon blood, nor upon personal interest, but upon love. Love, not self—the cross of Christ, and not the mere working out of the ideas of individual humanity.

One word only, in conclusion. Upon this, the great truth of the Epiphany, the apostle founds a prayer. He prays, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This manifestation of joy and good to the Gentiles was, according to him, the great mystery of love. A love, brighter, deeper, wider, higher than the largest human heart had ever yet dreamed of. But the apostle tells us it is, after all, but a glimpse of the love of God. How should we learn it more? How should we comprehend the whole meaning of the Epiphany? By sitting down to read works of theology? The Apostle Paul tells us—No. You must love, in order to understand love. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Brother men, one act of charity will teach us more of the love of God than a thousand sermons—one act of unselfishness, of real self-denial, the putting forth of one loving feeling to the outcast and "those who are out of the way," will tell us more of the meaning of the Epiphany than whole volumes of the wisest writers on theology.

XVI.

THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE.

"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—1 Cor. viii. 7-13.

We have already divided this chapter into two branches—the former portion of it containing the difference between Christian knowledge and secular knowledge, and the second portion containing the apostolic exposition of the law of Christian conscience. The first of these we endeavored to expound last Sunday, but it may be well briefly to recapitulate the principles of that discourse in a somewhat different form.

Corinth, as we all know and remember, was a city built on the sea-coast, having a large and free communication with all foreign nations; and there was also within it, and going on amongst its inhabitants, a free interchange of thought, and a vivid power of communicating the philosophy and truths of those days to each other. Now it is plain, that to a society in such a state, and to minds so educated, the Gospel of Christ must have presented a peculiar attraction, presenting itself to them, as it did, as a law of Christian liberty. And so in Corinth the Gospel had "free course and was glorified," and was received with great joy by almost all men, and by minds of all classes and all sects; and a large number of these attached themselves to the teaching of the Apostle Paul as the most accredited expounder of Christianity—the "royal law of liberty." But it seems, from what we read in this epistle, that a large number of these men received Christianity as a thing intellectual, and that alone—and not as a thing which touched the conscience, and swayed and purified the affections. Thus this liberty became to them almost *all*—they ran into sin or went to extravagance—they rejoiced in their freedom from the superstitions, the ignorances, and the scruples which bound their weaker brethren; but had no charity—none of that intense charity which characterized the Apostle Paul, for those still struggling in the delusions and darkness from which they themselves were free.

More than that, they demanded their right, their Christian liberty, of expressing their opinions in the church, merely for the sake of *exhibiting* the Christian graces and spiritual gifts which had been showered upon them so largely; until by degrees those very assemblies became a lamentable exhibition of their own depravity, and led to numerous irregularities which we find severely rebuked by the Apostle Paul. Their women, rejoicing in the emancipation which had been given to the Christian community, laid aside the old habits of attire which had been consecrated so long by Grecian and Jewish custom, and appeared with their heads uncovered in the Christian community. Still further than that, the Lord's Supper exhibited an absence of all solemnity, and seemed more a meeting for licentious gratification, where "one was hungry, and another was drunken"—a place in which earthly drunkenness, the mere enjoyment of the appetites, had taken the place of Christian charity towards each other.

And the same feeling—this love of mere liberty—liberty in itself—manifested itself in many other directions. Holding by this freedom, their philosophy taught that the body, that is, the flesh, was the only cause of sin; that the soul was holy and pure; and that therefore, to be free from the body would be entire, perfect, Christian emancipation. And so came in that strange, wrong doctrine, exhibited in Corinth, where immortality was taught separate from, and in opposition to, the doctrine of the resurrection. And afterwards they went on with their conclusions about liberty, to maintain that the body, justified by the sacrifice of Christ, was no longer capable of sin; and that in the evil which was done by the body the soul had taken no part. And therefore sin was to them but as a name, from which a Christian conscience was to be freed altogether. So that when one of their number had fallen into grievous sin, and had committed fornication, "such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles," so far from being humbled by it, they were "puffed up," as if they were exhibiting to the world an enlightened, true, perfect Christianity—separate from all prejudices.

To such a society and to such a state of mind the Apostle Paul preached, in all its length, breadth, and fullness, the humbling doctrines of the cross of Christ. He taught that knowledge was one thing—that charity was *another* thing; that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up." He reminded them that love was the perfection of knowledge. In other words, his teaching came to this: there are two kinds of knowledge; the one the knowledge of the intellect, the other the knowledge of the heart. Intellectually, God never can be known. He must be known by love—for, "if any man love God, the same is known of Him." Here, then, we have arrived in another way at precisely the same conclusion at which we arrived last Sunday. Here are two kinds of knowledge, secular knowledge and Christian knowledge; and Christian knowledge is this—to know by love.

Let us now consider the remainder of the chapter, which treats of the law of Christian conscience. You will observe that it divides itself into two branches—the first containing an exposition of the law itself, and the second the Christian applications which flow out of this exposition.

I. The way in which the apostle expounds the law of Christian conscience is this:—Guilt is contracted by the soul, in so far as it sins against and transgresses the law of God by doing that which it believes to be wrong: not so much what *is* wrong as what *appears* to *it* to be wrong. This is the doctrine distinctly laid down in the seventh and eighth verses. The apostle tells the Corinthians—these strong-minded Corinthians—that the superstitions of their weaker brethren were unquestionably wrong. "Meat," he says, "commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse." He then tells them further, that "there is not in every man that knowledge; for some, with conscience of the idol, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol." Here, then, is an ignorant, mistaken, ill-formed conscience; and yet he goes on to tell them that this conscience, so ill-informed, yet binds the possessor of it: "and their conscience being weak, is defiled." For example—there could be no harm in eating the flesh of an animal that had been offered to an idol or false god; for a false god is nothing, and it is impossible for it to have contracted positive defilement by being offered to that which is a positive and absolute negation. And yet if any man thought it wrong to eat such flesh, to him it *was* wrong; for in that act there would be a deliberate act of transgression—a deliberate preference of that which was mere enjoyment, to that which was apparently, though it may be only apparently, sanctioned by the law of God. And so it would carry with it all the disobedience, all the guilt, and all the misery which belongs to the doing of an act altogether wrong; or as St. Paul expresses it, the conscience would become defiled.

Here, then, we arrive at the first distinction—the distinction between absolute and relative right and wrong. Absolute right and absolute wrong, like absolute truth, can each be but *one* and unalterable in the sight of God. The one absolute *right*—the charity of God and the sacrifice of Christ—this, from eternity to eternity must be the sole measure of eternal right. But human right or human wrong—that is, the merit or demerit of any action done by any particular man—must be measured, not by that absolute standard, but as a matter relative to his particular circumstances, the state of the age in which he lives, and his own knowledge of right and wrong. For we come into this world with a moral sense; or to speak more Christianly, with a conscience. And yet that will tell us but very little distinctly. It tells us broadly that which is right and that which is wrong, so that every child can understand this. That charity and self-denial are right—this we see recognized in almost every nation. But the boundaries of these two—when and how far self-denial is right—what are the bounds of charity—this it is for different circumstances yet to bring out and determine.

And so it will be found that there is a different standard among different nations and in different ages. That, for example, which was the standard among the Israelites in the earlier ages, and before their settlement in Canaan, was very different from the higher and truer standard of right and wrong recognized by the later prophets. And the standard in the third and fourth centuries after Christ, was truly and unquestionably an entirely different one from that recognized in the nineteenth century among ourselves.

Let me not be mistaken. I do not say that right and wrong are merely conventional, or merely chronological or geographical, or that they vary with latitude and longitude. I do not say that there ever was or ever can be a nation so utterly blinded and perverted in its moral sense as to acknowledge that which is wrong—seen and known to be wrong—as right; or on the other hand, to profess that which is seen and understood as right, to be wrong. But what I do say is this: that the form and aspect in which different deeds appear, so vary, that there will be forever a change and alteration in men's opinions, and that which is really most generous may seem most base, and that which is really most base may appear most generous. So, for example, as I have already said, there are two things universally recog nized—recognized as right by every man whose conscience is not absolutely perverted—charity and self-denial. The charity of God, the sacrifice of Christ—these are the two grand, leading principles of the Gospel; and in some form or other you will find these lying at the roots of every profession and state of feeling in almost every age. But the form in which these appear will vary with all the gradations which are to be found between the lowest savage state and the highest and most enlightened Christianity.

For example, in ancient Israel the law of love was expounded thus:—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." Among the American Indians and at the Cape, the only homage, perchance, given to self-denial, was the strange admiration given to that prisoner of war who bore with unflinching fortitude the torture of his country's enemies. In ancient India the same principle was exhibited, but in a more strange and perverted manner. The homage there given to self-denial, self-sacrifice, was this—that the highest form of religion was considered to be that exhibited by the devotee who sat in a tree until the birds had built their nests in his hair—until his nails, like those of the King of Babylon, had grown like birds' talons—until they had grown into his hands—and he became absorbed into the Divinity.

We will take another instance, and one better known. In ancient Sparta it was the custom to teach children to steal. And here there would seem to be a contradiction to our proposition—here it would seem as if right and wrong were matters merely conventional; for surely stealing can never be any thing but wrong. But if we look deeper we shall see that there is no contradiction here. It was not stealing which was admired; the child was punished if the theft was discovered; but it was the dexterity which was admired, and that because it was a warlike virtue, necessary, it may be, to a people in continual rivalry with their neighbors. It was not that honesty was despised and dishonesty esteemed, but that honesty and dishonesty were made subordinate to that which appeared to them of higher importance, namely, the duty of concealment. And so we come back to the principle which we laid down at first. In every age, among all nations, the same broad principle remains, but the application of it varies. The conscience may be ill-informed, and in this sense only are right and wrong conventional—varying with latitude and longitude, depending upon chronology and geography.

The principle laid down by the Apostle Paul is this:—*A* man will be judged, not by the abstract law of God, not by the rule of absolute right, but much rather by the relative law of conscience. This he states most distinctly—looking at the question on both sides. That which seems to a man to be right is, in a certain sense, right to him; and that which seems to a man to be wrong, in a certain sense *is* wrong to him. For example: he says in his Epistle to the Romans (ver. 14) that, "sin is not imputed when there is no law," in other words, if a man does not really know a thing to be wrong, there is a sense in which, if not right to him, it ceases to be so wrong as it would otherwise be. With respect to the other of these sides, however, the case is still more distinct and plain. Here, in the judgment which the apostle delivers in the parallel chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (the xivth), he says, "I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." In other words, whatever may be the abstract merits of the question—however in God's jurisprudence any particular act may stand—to you, thinking it to be wrong, it manifestly *is* wrong, and your conscience will gather round it a stain of guilt if you do it.

In order to understand this more fully, let us take a few instances. There is a difference between *truth* and *veracity*. Veracity—mere veracity—is a small, poor thing. Truth is something greater and higher. Veracity is merely the correspondence between some particular statement and facts—truth is the correspondence between a man's whole soul and reality. It is possible for a man to say that which, unknown to him, is false; and yet he may be true: because if deprived of truth he is deprived of it unwillingly. It is possible, on the other hand, for a man to utter veracities, and yet at the very time that he is uttering those veracities, to be false to himself, to his brother, and to his God. One of the most signal instances of this is to be seen in the Book of Job. Most of what Job's friends said to him were veracious statements. Much of what Job said for himself was unveracious and mistaken. And yet those veracities of theirs were so torn from all connection with fact and truth, that they became falsehoods; and they were, as has been said, nothing more than "orthodox liars" in the sight of God. On the other hand, Job, blundering perpetually, and falling into false doctrine, was yet a true man—searching for and striving after the truth; and if deprived of it for a time, deprived of it with all his heart and soul unwillingly. And therefore it was that at last the Lord appeared out of the whirlwind to confound the men of mere veracity, and to stand by and support the honor of the heartily true.

Let us apply the principle further. It is a matter of less importance that a man should state true views, than that he should state views truly. We will put this in its strongest form. Unitarianism is false—Trinitarianism is true. But yet in the sight of God, and with respect to a man's eternal destinies hereafter, it would surely be better for him earnestly, honestly, truly, to hold the doctrines of Unitarianism, than in a cowardly or indifferent spirit, or influenced by authority, or from considerations of interest, or for the sake of lucre, to hold the doctrines of Trinitarianism.

For instance: Not many years ago the Church of Scotland was severed into two great divisions, and gave to this age a marvellous proof that there is still amongst us the power of living faith—when five hundred ministers gave up all that earth holds dear—position in the Church they had loved; friendships and affections formed, and consecrated by long fellowship, in its communion; and almost their hopes of gaining a livelihood—rather than assert a principle which seemed to them to be a false one. Now, my brethren, surely the question in such a case for us to consider is not this, merely—whether of the two sections held the abstract *right* —held the principle in its integrity—but surely far rather, this: who on either side was true to the light within, true to God, true to the truth as God had revealed it to his soul.

Now it is precisely upon this principle that we are enabled to indulge a Christian hope that many of those who in ancient times were persecutors, for example, may yet be justified at the bar of Christ. Nothing can make persecution right—it is wrong, essentially, eternally wrong in the sight of God. And yet, if a man sincerely and assuredly thinks that Christ has laid upon him a command to persecute with fire and sword, it is surely better that he should, in spite of all feelings of tenderness and compassion, cast aside the dearest affections at the command of his Redeemer, than that he should, in mere laxity and tenderness, turn aside from what seemed to him to be his duty. At least, this appears to be the opinion of the Apostle Paul. He tells us that he was "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," that "he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," that "being exceedingly mad against the disciples, he persecuted them even unto strange cities." But he tells us further, that "for this cause he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Now take a case precisely opposite: In ancient times the

Jews did that by which it appeared to them that they would contract defilement and guilt—they spared the lives of the enemies which they had taken in battle. Brethren, the eternal law is, that charity is right: and that law is eternally right which says, "Thou shalt love thine enemy." And had the Jews acted upon this principle they would have done well to spare their enemies: but they did it, thinking it to be wrong, transgressing that law which commanded them to slay their idolatrous enemies—not from generosity, but in cupidity—not from charity, but from lax zeal. And so doing, the act was altogether wrong.

II. Such is the apostle's exposition of the law of Christian conscience. Let us now, in the second place, consider the applications, both of a personal and of a public nature, which arise out of it.

1. The first application is a personal one. It is this:—Do what *seems* to *you* to be right: it is only so that you will at last learn by the grace of God to see clearly what *is* right. A man thinks within himself that it is God's law and God's will that he should act thus and thus. There is nothing possible for us to say, there is no advice for us to give, but this—"You *must* so act." He is responsible for the opinions he holds, and still more for the way in which he arrived at them—whether in a slothful and selfish, or in an honest and truth-seeking manner; but being now his soul's convictions, you can give no other law than this—"You must obey your conscience." For no man's conscience gets so seared by doing what is wrong unknowingly, as by doing that which appears to be wrong to his conscience. The Jews' consciences did not get seared by their slaying the Canaanites, but they did become seared by their failing to do what appeared to them to be right. Therefore, woe to you if you do what others think right, instead of obeying the dictates of your own conscience; woe to you if you allow authority, or prescription, or fashion, or influence, or any other human thing, to interfere with that awful and sacred thing—responsibility. "Every man," said the apostle, "must give an account of himself to God."

2. The second application of this principle has reference to others. No doubt, to the large, free, enlightened mind of the Apostle Paul all these scruples and superstitions must have seemed mean, trivial, and small indeed. It was a matter to him of far less importance that truth should be *established* than that it should be arrived at truly—a matter of far less importance, even, that right should be done, than

that right should be done rightly. Conscience was far more sacred to him than even liberty—it was to him a prerogative far more precious to assert the rights of Christian conscience. than to magnify the privileges of Christian liberty. The scruple may be small and foolish, but it may be impossible to uproot the scruple without tearing up the feeling of the sanctity of conscience, and of reverence to the law of God, associated with this scruple. And therefore the Apostle Paul counsels these men to abridge their Christian liberty, and not to eat of those things which had been sacrificed to idols, but to have compassion upon the scruples of their weaker brethren.

And this, for two reasons. The first of these is a mere reason of Christian feeling. It might cause exquisite pain to sensitive minds to see those things which appeared to them to be wrong, done by Christian brethren. Now you may take a parallel case. It may be, if you will, mere superstition to bow at the name of Jesus. It may be, and no doubt is, founded upon a mistaken interpretation of that passage in the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 10), which says that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." But there are many congregations in which this has been the long-established rule, and there are many Christians who would feel pained to see such a practice discontinued—as if it implied a declension from the reverence due to "that name which is above every name." Now what in this case is the Christian duty? Is it this—to stand upon our Christian liberty? Or is it not rather this—to comply with a prejudice which is manifestly a harmless one, rather than give pain to a Christian brother?

Take another case. It may be a mistaken scruple; but there is no doubt that it causes much pain to many Christians to see a carriage used on the Lord's day. But you, with higher views of the spirit of Christianity, who know that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"—who can enter more deeply into the truth taught by our blessed Lord, that every day is to be dedicated tc Him and consecrated to His service—upon the high principle of Christian liberty you can use your carriage—you can exercise your liberty. But if there are Christian brethren to whom this would give pain—then I humbly ask you, but most earnestly—What is the duty here? Is it not this—to abridge your Christian liberty—and to go through rain, and mud, and snow, rather than give pain to one Christian conscience?

To give one more instance. The words, and garb, and customs of that sect of Christians called Quakers may be formal enough; founded, no doubt, as in the former case, upon a mistaken interpretation of a passage in the Bible. But they are at least harmless; and have long been associated with the simplicity, and benevolence, and Christian humbleness of this body of Christians—the followers of one who, three hundred years ago, set out upon the glorious enterprise of making all men friends. Now would it be Christian, or would it not rather be something more than unchristian—would it not be gross rudeness and coarse unfeelingness to treat such words, and habits, and customs, with any thing but respect and reverence?

Further: the apostle enjoined this duty upon the Corinthian converts, of abridging their Christian liberty, not merely because it might give pain to indulge it, but also because it might even lead their brethren into sin. For, if any man should eat of the flesh offered to an idol, feeling himself justified by his conscience, it were well: but if any man, overborne by authority or interest, were to do this, not according to conscience, but against it, there would be a distinct and direct act of disobedience—a conflict between his sense of right and the gratification of his appetites, or the power of influence; and then his compliance would as much damage his conscience and moral sense as if the act had been wrong in itself.

In the personal application of these remarks, there are three things which we have to say. The first is this:—Distinguish, I pray you, between this tenderness for a brother's conscience and mere time-serving. This same apostle whom we here see so gracefully giving way upon the ground of expediency when Christian principles were left entire, was the same who stood firm and strong as a rock when any thing was demanded which trenched upon Christian principle. When some required, as a matter of necessity for salvation, that these converts should be circumcised, the apostle says—"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour!" It was not indifference—it was not cowardice—it was not the mere love of peace, purchased by the sacrifice of principle, that prompted this counsel—but it was Christian love—that delicate and Christian love which dreads to tamper with the sanctities of a brother's conscience.

2. The second thing we have to say is this—that this abridgment of their liberty is a duty more especially incumbent upon all who are possessed of influence. There are some men, happily for themselves we may say, who are so insignificant that they can take their course quietly in the val-

levs of life, and who can exercise the fullest Christian liberty without giving pain to others. But it is the price which all who are possessed of influence must pay—that their acts must be measured, not in themselves, but according to their influence on others. So, my Christian brethren, to bring this matter home to every-day experience and common life, if the landlord uses his authority and influence to induce his tenant to vote against his conscience, it may be he has secured one voice to the principle which is right, or at all events, to that which seemed to him to be right: but he has gained that single voice at the sacrifice and expense of a brother's soul. Or again—if for the sake of insuring personal politeness and attention, the rich man puts a gratuity into the hand of a servant of some company which has forbidden him to receive it, he gains the attention, he insures the politeness, but he gains it at the sacrifice and expense of a man and a Christian brother.

3. The last remark which we have to make is this:—How possible it is to mix together the vigor of a masculine and manly intellect with the tenderness and charity which is taught by the Gospel of Christ. No man ever breathed so freely when on earth the air and atmosphere of heaven as the Apostle Paul—no man ever soared so high above all prejudices, narrowness, littlenesses, scruples, as he: and yet no man ever bound himself as Paul bound himself to the ignorance, the scruples, the prejudices of his brethren. So that what in other cases was infirmity, imbecility, and superstition, gathered round it in his case the pure high spirit of Christian charity and Christian delicacy.

And now, out of the writings, and sayings, and deeds of those who loudly proclaim "the rights of man" and the "rights of liberty," match us, if you can, with one sentence so sublime, so noble, one that will so stand at the bar of God hereafter, as this single, glorious sentence of his, in which he asserts the rights of Christian conscience above the claims of Christian liberty—"Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

XVII.

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

On Sunday last I endeavored to bring before you the subject of that which Scripture calls the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The two points on which we were trying to get clear notions were these: what is meant by being under the law, and what is meant by being free from the law? When the Bible says that a man led by the Spirit is not under the law, it does not mean that he is free because he may sin without being punished for it, but it means that he is free because, being taught by God's Spirit to love what His law commands, he is no longer conscious of acting from restraint. The law does not drive him, because the Spirit leads him.

There is a state, brethren, when we recognize God, but do not love God in Christ. It is that state when we admire what is excellent, but are not able to perform it. It is a state when the love of good comes to nothing, dying away in a mere desire. That is the state of nature, when we are under the law, and not converted to the love of Christ. And then there is another state, when God writes His law upon our hearts by love instead of fear. The one state is this, "I can not do the things that I would"—the other state is this, "I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy commandments."

Just so far, therefore, as a Christian is led by the Spirit, he is a conqueror. A Christian in full possession of his privileges is a man whose very step ought to have in it all the elasticity of triumph, and whose very look ought to have in it all the brightness of victory. And just so far as a Christian suffers sin to struggle in him and overcome his resolutions, just so far he is under the law. And that is the key to the whole doctrine of the New Testament. From first to last the great truth put forward is—The law can neither save you nor sanctify you. The Gospel can do both; for it is rightly and emphatically called the perfect law of liberty.

We proceed to-day to a further illustration of this subject

—of Christian victory. In the verses which I have read out, the apostle has evidently the same subject in his mind: slavery through the law: victory through the Gospel. "The strength of sin," he says, "is the law." God giveth us the victory through Christ. And when we are familiar with St. Paul's trains of thinking, we find this idea coming in perpetually. It runs like a colored thread through embroidery, appearing on the upper surface every now and then in a different shape—a leaf, it may be, or a flower; but the same thread still, if you only trace it back with your finger. And this was the golden recurring thread in the mind of Paul. Restraint and law can not check sin; they only gall it and make it struggle and rebel. The love of God in Christ, that, and only that, can give man the victory.

But in this passage the idea of victory is brought to bear upon the most terrible of all—a Christian's enemies. It is faith here conquering in death. And the apostle brings together all the believer's antagonists—the law's power, sin, and death the chief antagonist of all: and then, as it were on a conqueror's battle-field, shouts over them the hymn of triumph—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." We shall take up these two points to dwell upon:

I. The awfulness which hangs round the dying hour.
II. Faith conquering in death.

That which makes it peculiarly terrible to die is asserted in this passage to be guilt. We lay a stress upon this expression—the sting. It is not said that sin is the only bitterness, but it is the sting which contains in it the venom of a most exquisite torture. And in truth, brethren, it is no mark of courage to speak lightly of human dying. We may do it in bravado, or in wantonness; but no man who thinks can call it a trifling thing to die. True thoughtfulness must shrink from death without Christ. There is a world of untold sensations crowded into that moment when a man puts his hand to his forehead and feels the damp upon it which tells him his hour is come. He has been waiting for death all his life, and now it is come. It is all over—his chance is past, and his eternity is settled. None of us know, except by guess, what that sensation is. Myriads of human beings have felt it to whom life was dear; but they never spoke out their feelings, for such things are untold. And to every individual man throughout all eternity that sensation in its fullness can come but once. It is mockery, brethren, for a man to speak lightly of that which he can not know till it comes.

Now the first cause which makes it a solemn thing to die is the instinctive cleaving of every thing that lives to its own existence. That unutterable thing which we call our being —the idea of parting with it is agony. It is the first and the intensest desire of living things, to be. Enjoyment, blessedness, every thing we long for, is wrapped up in being. Darkness and all that the spirit recoils from, is contained in this idea, not to be. It is in virtue of this unquenchable impulse that the world, in spite of all the misery that is in it, continues to struggle on. What are war, and trade, and labor, and professions? Are they all the result of struggling to be great? No, my brethren, they are the result of struggling *to be.* The first thing that men and nations labor for is existence. Reduce the nation or the man to their last resources, and only see what marvellous energy of contrivance the love of being arms them with. Read back the pauper's history at the end of seventy years—his strange sad history, in which scarcely a single day could insure subsistence for the morrow—and yet learn what he has done these long years in the stern struggle with impossibility to hold his being where every thing is against him, and to keep an existence whose only conceivable charm is this, that it *is* existence.

Now it is with this intense passion for being that the idea of death clashes. Let us search why it is we shrink from death. This reason, brethren, we shall find, that it presents to us the idea of *not being.* Talk as we will of immortality, there is an obstinate feeling that we can not master, that we end in death; and *that* may be felt together with the firmest belief of a resurrection. Brethren, our faith tells us one thing, and our sensations tell us another. When we die, we are surrendering in truth all that with which we have associated existence. All that we know of life is connected with a shape, a form, a body of materialism; and now that that is palpably melting away into nothingness, the boldest heart may be excused a shudder, when there is forced upon it, in spite of itself, the idea of ceasing forever.

The second reason is not one of imagination at all, but most sober reality. It is a solemn thing to die, because it is the parting with all round which the heart's best affections have twined themselves. There are some men who have not the capacity for keen enjoyment. Their affections have nothing in them of intensity, and so they pass through life without ever so uniting themselves with what they meet, that there would be any thing of pain in the severance. Of course, with them the bitterness of death does not attach so much to the idea of parting. But, my brethren, how is it with human nature generally? Our feelings do not weaken as we go on in life; emotions are less shown, and we get a command over our features and our expressions; but the man's feelings are deeper than the boy's. It is length of time that makes attachment. We become wedded to the sights and sounds of this lovely world more closely as years go on.

Young men, with nothing rooted deep, are prodigal of life. It is an adventure to them, rather than a misfortune, to leave their country forever. With the old man it is like tearing his own heart from him. And so it was that when Lot quitted Sodom the younger members of his family went on gladly. It is a touching truth; it was the aged one who looked behind to the home which had so many recollections connected with it. And therefore it is, that when men approach that period of existence when they must go, there is an instinctive lingering over things which they shall never see again. Every time the sun sets, every time the old man sees his children gathering round him, there is a filling of the eye with an emotion that we can understand. There is upon his soul the thought of parting, that strange wrench from all we love, which makes death (say what moralists will of it) a bitter thing.

Another pang which belongs to death we find in the sensation of loneliness which attaches to it. Have we ever seen a ship preparing to sail with its load of pauper emigrants to a distant colony? If we have we know what that desolation is which comes from feeling unfriended on a new and untried excursion. All beyond the seas, to the ignorant poor man, is a strange land. They are going away from the helps and the friendships and the companionships of life, scarcely knowing what is before them. And it is in such a moment, when a man stands upon a deck taking his last look of his fatherland, that there comes upon him a sensation new, strange, and inexpressibly miserable—the feeling of being alone in the world.

Brethren, with all the bitterness of such a moment, it is but a feeble image when placed by the side of the loneliness of death. We die alone. We go on our dark mysterious journey for the first time in all our existence, without one to accompany us. Friends are beside our bed, they must stay behind. Grant that a Christian has something like familiarity with the Most High, *that* breaks this solitary feeling; but what is it with the mass of men? It is a question full of loneliness to them. What is it they are to see? What are they to meet? Is it not true, that, to the larger number of this congregation, there is no one point in all eternity on which the eye can fix distinctly and rest gladly—nothing beyond the grave, except a dark space into which they must plunge alone?

And yet, my brethren, with all these ideas no doubt vividly before his mind, it was none of them that the apostle selected as the crowning bitterness of dying. It was not the thought of surrendering existence. It was not the parting from all bright and lovely things. It was not the shudder of sinking into the sepulchre alone. "The sting of death is sin."

Now there are two ways in which this deep truth applies itself. There is something that appals in death when there are distinct separate acts of guilt resting on the memory; and there is something, too, in the possession of a guilty heart which is quite another thing from acts of sin, that makes it an awful thing to die. There are some who carry about with them the dreadful secret of sin that has been done; guilt that has a name. A man has injured some one; he has made money, or got on by unfair means; he has been unchaste; he has done some of those thousand things of life which leave upon the heart the dark spot that will not come out. All these are sins which you can count up and number. And the recollection of things like these is that agony which we call remorse. Many of us have remembrances of this kind which are fatal to serenity. We shut them out, but it will not do. They bide their time, and then suddenly present themselves, together with the thought of a judgment seat. When a guilty man begins to think of dying, it is like a vision of the Son of Man presenting itself and calling out the voices of all the unclean spirits in the man—"Art thou come to torment us before the time?"

But, my brethren, it is a mistake if we suppose that is the common way in which sin stings at the thought of death. Men who have lived the career of passionate life have distinct and accumulated acts of guilt before their eyes. But with most men it is not guilty acts, but guiltiness of heart that weighs the heaviest. Only take yesterday as a specimen of life. What was it with most of us? A day of sin. Was it sin palpable and dark, such as we shall remember painfully this day year? Nay, my brethren, unkindness, petulance, wasted time, opportunities lost, frivolous conversation, *that* was our chief guilt. And yet with all that, trifling, as it may be, when it comes to be the history of life does it not leave behind a restless undefinable sense of fault, a vague idea of debt, but to what extent we know not, perhaps the more wretched just because it is uncertain?

My Christian brethren, this is the sting of sinfulness, the wretched consciousness of an unclean heart. It is just this feeling, "God is not my friend; I am going on to the grave, and no *man* can say aught against me, but my heart is not right; I want a river like that which the ancients fabled—the river of forgetfulness—that I might go down into it and bathe, and come up a new man. It is not so much what I have done; it is what I am. Who shall save me from myself?" Oh, it is a desolate thing to think of the coffin when that thought is in all its misery before the soul. It is the sting of death.

And now let us bear one thing in mind—the sting of sin is not a constant pressure. It may be that we live many years in the world before a death in our own family forces the thought personally home: many years before all those sensations which are so often the precursors of the tomb—the quick short cough, lassitude, emaciation, pain—come in startling suddenness upon us in our young vigor, and make us feel what it is to be here with death inevitable to ourselves. And when those things become habitual, habit makes delicacy the same forgetful thing as health, so that neither in sickness nor in health is the thought of death a constant pressure. It is only now and then; but so often as death is a reality, the sting of death is sin.

Once more: we remark that all this power of sin to agonize is traced by the apostle to the law—"the strength of sin is the law;" by which he means to say that sin would not be so violent if it were not for the attempt of God's law to restrain it. It is the law which makes sin strong. And he does not mean particularly the law of Moses. He means any law, and all law. Law is what forbids and threatens; law bears gallingly on those who want to break it. And St. Paul declares this, that no law, not even God's law, can make men righteous in heart, unless the Spirit has taught men's hearts to acquiesce in the law. It can only force out into rebellion the sin that is in them.

It is so, brethren, with a nation's law. The voice of the nation must go along with it. It must be the expression of their own feeling, and then they will have it obeyed. But if it is only the law of a government, a law which is against the whole spirit of the people, there is first the murmur of a nation's disapprobation, and then there is transgression, and then, if the law be vindicated with a high hand, the next step is the bursting that law asunder in national revolution. And so it is with God's law. It will never control a man long who does not from his heart love it. First comes a sensation of restraint, and then comes a murmuring of the heart; and last, there comes the rising of passion in its giant might, made desperate by restraint. That is the law giving strength to sin.

And therefore, brethren, if all we know of God be this, that He has made laws, and that it is terrible to break them; if all our idea of religion be this, that it is a thing of commands and hindrances—thou shalt, and thou shalt not; we are under the law, and there is no help for it. We *must* shrink from the encounter with death.

We pass to our second subject — Faith conquering in death.

And, before we enter upon this topic, there are two general remarks that we have to make. The first is, The elevating power of faith. There is nothing in all this world that ever led man on to real victory but faith. Faith is that looking forward to a future with something like certainty, that raises man above the narrow feelings of the present. Even in this life he is a greater man, a man of more elevated character, who is steadily pursuing a plan that requires some years to accomplish, than he who is living by the day. Look forward but ten years, and plan for it, live for it; there is something of manhood, something of courage required to conquer the thousand things that stand in your way. And therefore it is, that faith, and nothing but faith, gives victory in death. It is that elevation of character which we get from looking steadily and forever forward till eternity becomes a real home to us, that enables us to look down upon the last struggle, and the funeral, and the grave, not as the great end of all, but only as something that stands between us and the end. We are conquerors of death when we are able to look beyond it.

Our second remark is for the purpose of fixing special attention upon this, that ours is not merely to be victory, it is to be victory through Christ. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory, brethren, mere victory over death, is no unearthly thing. You may get it by infidelity. Only let a man sin long enough, and desperately enough, to shut judgment altogether out of his creed, and then you have a man who can bid defiance to the grave. It was so that our country's greatest infidel historian met death. He quitted the world without parade and without display. If we want a specimen of victory apart from Christ, we have it on his deathbed. He left all this strange world of restlessness calmly, like an unreal show that must go to pieces, and he himself an unreality departing from it. A skeptic can be a conqueror in death.

Or again, mere manhood may give us a victory. He who has only learned not to be afraid to die, has not learned much. We have steel and nerve enough in our hearts to dare any thing. And, after all, it is a triumph so common as scarcely to deserve the name. Felons die on the scaffold like men; soldiers can be hired by tens of thousands, for a few pence a day, to front death in its worst form. Every minute that we live sixty of the human race are passing away, and the greater part with courage—the weak and the timid as well as the resolute. Courage is a very different thing from the Christian's victory.

Once more, brethren, necessity can make man conqueror over death. We can make up our minds to any thing when it once becomes inevitable. It is the agony of suspense that makes danger dreadful. History can tell us that men can look with desperate calmness upon hell itself when once it has become a certainty. And it is this, after all, that commonly makes the dying hour so quiet a thing. It is more dreadful in the distance than in the reality. When a man feels that there is no help, and he must go, he lays him down to die quietly as a tired traveller wraps himself in his cloak to sleep. It is quite another thing from all this that Paul meant by victory.

In the first place, it is the prerogative of a Christian to be conqueror over doubt. Brethren, do we all know what doubt means? Perchance not. There are some men who have never believed enough to doubt. There are some who have never thrown their hopes with such earnestness on the world to come, as to feel anxiety for fear it should not all be true. But every one who knows what faith is, knows too what is the desolation of doubt. We pray till we begin to ask, Is there one who hears, or am I whispering to myself? We hear the consolation administered to the bereaved, and we see the coffin lowered into the grave, and the thought comes, What if all this doctrine of a life to come be but the dream of man's imaginative mind, carried on from age to age, and so believed, because it is a venerable superstition? Now Christ gives us victory over that terrible suspicion in two ways—first, He does it by His own resurrection. We have got a fact there that all the metaphysics about impossibility can not rob us of. In moments of perplexity we look back to this. The grave has once, and more than once, at the Redeemer's bidding, given up its dead. It is a world-fact

It tells us what the Bible means by our resurrection—not a spiritual rising into new holiness merely — that, but also something more. It means that in our own proper identity we shall live again. Make that thought real, and God has given you, so far, victory over the grave through Christ.

There is another way in which we get the victory over doubt, and that is by living in Christ. All doubt comes from living out of habits of affectionate obedience to God By idleness, by neglected prayer, we lose our power of realizing things not seen. Let a man be religious and irreligious at intervals—irregular, inconsistent, without some distinct thing to live for—it is a matter of impossibility that he can be free from doubts. He must make up his mind for a dark life. Doubts can only be dispelled by that kind of active life that realizes Christ. And there is no faith that gives a victory so steadily triumphant as that. When such a man comes near the opening of the vault, it is no world of sorrows he is entering upon. He is only going to see things that he has felt, for he has been living in heaven. He has his grasp on things that other men are only groping after and touching now and then. Live above this world, brethren, and then the powers of the world to come are so upon you that there is no room for doubt.

Besides all this, it is a Christian's privilege to have victory over the fear of death. And here it is exceedingly easy to paint what, after all, is only the image-picture of a dying hour. It is the easiest thing to represent the dying Christian as a man who always sinks into the grave full of hope, full of triumph, in the certain hope of a blessed resurrection. Brethren, we must paint things in the sober colors of truth; not as they might be supposed to be, but as they are. Often that is only a picture. Either very few death-beds are Christian ones, or else triumph is a very different thing from what the word generally implies. Solemn, subdued, full of awe and full of solemnity, is the dying hour generally of the holiest men: sometimes almost darkness. Rapture is a rare thing, except in books and scenes.

Let us understand what really is the victory over fear It may be rapture or it may not. All that depends very much on temperament; and after all, the broken words of a dying man are a very poor index of his real state before God. Rapturous hope has been granted to martyrs in peculiar moments. It is on record of a minister of our own Church, that his expectation of seeing God in Christ became so intense as his last hour drew near, that his physician was compelled to bid him calm his transports, because in so ex cited a state he could not die. A strange unnatural energy was imparted to his muscular frame by his nerves overstrung with triumph. But, brethren, it fosters a dangerous feeling to take cases like those as precedents. It leads to that most terrible of all unrealities—the acting of a death-bed scene. A Christian conqueror dies calmly. Brave men in battle do not boast that they are not afraid. Courage is so natural to them that they are not conscious they are doing any thing out of the common way—Christian bravery is a deep, calm thing, unconscious of itself. There are more triumphant death-beds than we count, if we only remember this—true fearlessness makes no parade.

Oh, it is not only in those passionate effusions in which the ancient martyrs spoke sometimes of panting for the crushing of their limbs by the lions in the amphitheatre, or of holding out their arms to embrace the flames that were to curl round them—it is not then only that Christ has stood by His servants, and made them more than conquerors: there may be something of earthly excitement in all that. Every day His servants are dying modestly and peacefully—not a word of victory on their lips; but Christ's deep triumph in their hearts—watching the slow progress of their own decay, and yet so far emancipated from personal anxiety that they are still able to think and to plan for others, not knowing that they are doing any great thing. They die, and the world hears nothing of them; and yet theirs was the completest victory. They came to the battle-field, the field to which they had been looking forward all their lives, and the enemy was not to be found. There was no foe to fight with.

The last form in which a Christian gets the victory over death is by means of his resurrection. It seems to have been this which was chiefly alluded to by the apostle here; for he says, "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption . . . . *then* shall come to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." And to say the truth, brethren, it is a rhetorical expression rather than a sober truth when we call any thing, except the resurrection, victory over death. We may conquer doubt and fear when we are dying, but that is not conquering death. It is like a warrior crushed to death by a superior antagonist refusing to yield a groan, and bearing the glance of defiance to the last. You feel that he is an unconquerable spirit, but he is not the conqueror. And when you see flesh melting away, and mental power becoming infantine in its feebleness, and lips scarcely able to articulate, is there left one moment a doubt upon the mind as to *who* is the conqueror, in spite of all the unshaken fortitude there may be? The victory is on the side of death, not on the side of the dying.

And, my brethren, if we would enter into the full feeling of triumph contained in this verse, we must just try to bear in mind what this world would be without the thought of a resurrection. If we could conceive an unselfish man looking upon this world of desolation with that infinite compassion which all the brave and good feel, what conception could he have but that of defeat, and failure, and sadness—the sons of man mounting into a bright existence, and one after another falling back into darkness and nothingness, like soldiers trying to mount an impracticable breach, and falling back crushed and mangled into the ditch before the bayonets and the rattling fire of their conquerors. Misery and guilt, look which way you will, till the heart gets sick with looking at it.

Brethren, until a man looks on evil till it seems to him almost like a real personal enemy rejoicing over the destruction that it has made, he can scarcely conceive the deep rapture which rushed into the mind of the Apostle Paul when he remembered that a day was coming when all this was to be reversed. A day was coming, and it was the day of reality for which he lived, ever present and ever certain, when this sad world was to put off *forever* its changefulness and its misery, and the grave was to be robbed of its victory, and the bodies were to come forth purified by their long sleep. He called all this a victory, because he felt that it was a real battle that has to be fought and won before that can be secured. One battle has been fought by Christ, and another battle, most real and difficult, but yet a conquering one, is to be fought by us. He hath imparted to us the virtue of His wrestlings, and the strength of His victory. So that, when the body shall rise again, the power of the law to condemn is gone, because we have learned to love the law.

And now, to conclude all this, there are but two things which remain to say. In the first place, brethren, if we would be conquerors we must realize God's love in Christ. Take care not to be under the law. Constraint never yet made a conqueror: the utmost it can do is to make either a rebel or a slave. Believe that God loves you. He gave a triumphant demonstration of it in the cross. Never shall we conquer self till we have learned *to love.* My Christian brethren, let us remember our high privilege. Christian life, so far as it deserves the name, is victory. We are not going forth to mere battle—we are going forth to conquer. To gain mastery over self, and sin, and doubt, and fear: till the last coldness, coming across the brow, tells us that all is over and our warfare accomplished—that we are safe, the everlasting arms beneath us—*that* is our calling. Brethren beloved, do not be content with a slothful, dreamy, uncertain struggle. You are to conquer, and the banner under which we are to win is not fear, but love. "The strength of sin is the law;" the victory is by keeping before us God in Christ.

Lastly, there is need of encouragement for those of us whose faith is not of the conquering, but the timid kind. There are some whose hearts will reply to all this, Surely victory is not always a Christian's portion. Is there no cold dark watching in Christian life—no struggle when victory seems a mockery to speak of—no times when light and life seem feeble, and Christ is to us but a name, and death a reality? "Perfect love casteth out fear," but who has it? Victory is by faith, but, O God, who will tell us what this faith *is* that men speak of as a thing so easy; and how we are to get it! You tell us to pray for faith, but how shall we pray in earnest unless we first have the very faith we pray for?

My Christian brethren, it is just to this deepest cry of the human heart that it is impossible to return a full answer. All that is true. To feel faith is the grand difficulty of life. Faith is a deep impression of God and God's love, and personal trust in it. It is easy to say, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," but well we know it is easier said than done. We can not say how men are to *get* faith. It is God's gift, almost in the same way that genius is. You can not work *for* faith; you must have it first, and then work *from* it.

But, brethren beloved, we can say, Look up, though we know not how the mechanism of the will which directs the eye is to be put in motion; we can say, Look to God in Christ, though we know not how men are to obtain faith to do it. Let us be in earnest. Our polar star is the love of the cross. Take the eye off that, and you are in darkness and bewilderment at once. Let us not mind what is past. Perhaps it is all failure, and useless struggle, and broken resolves. What then? Settle this first, brethren, Are you in earnest? If so, though your faith be weak and your struggles unsatisfactory, you may begin the hymn of triumph *now*, for victory is pledged. "Thanks be to God, which"—not *shall* give, but—"*giveth* us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

XVIII.

MAN'S GREATNESS AND GOD'S GREATNESS.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."—Isa. lvii. 15.

The origin of this announcement seems to have been the state of contempt in which religion found itself in the days of Isaiah. One of the most profligate monarchs that ever disgraced the page of sacred history sat upon the throne of Judah. His court was filled with men who recommended themselves chiefly by their licentiousness. The altar was forsaken. Sacrilegious hands had placed the abominations of heathenism in the Holy Place; and piety, banished from the State, the Church, and the royal Court, was once more as she had been before, and will be again, a wanderer on the face of the earth.

Now, however easy it may be to contemplate such a state of things at a distance, it never takes place in a man's own day and time, without suggesting painful perplexities of a twofold nature. In the first place, suspicions respecting God's character; and, in the second place, misgivings as to his own duty. For a faithless heart whispers, Is it worth while to suffer for a sinking cause? Honor, preferment, grandeur, follow in the train of unscrupulous conduct. To be strict in goodness is to be pointed at and shunned. To be no better than one's neighbors is the only way of being at peace. It seems to have been to such a state as this that Isaiah was commissioned to bring light. He vindicated God's character by saying that He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." He encouraged those who were trodden down to perseverance, by reminding them that real dignity is something very different from present success. God dwells with him "that is of a contrite and humble spirit." We consider—

I. That in which the greatness of God consists.
II. That in which man's greatness consists.

I. The first measurement, so to speak, which is given us of God's greatness, is in respect of Time. He inhabiteth eternity. There are some subjects on which it would be good to dwell, if it were only for the sake of that enlargement of mind which is produced by their contemplation. And eternity is one of these, so that you can not steadily fix the thoughts upon it without being sensible of a peculiar kind of elevation, at the same time that you are humbled by a personal feeling of utter insignificance. You have come in contact with something so immeasurable—beyond the narrow range of our common speculations—that you are exalted by the very conception of it. Now the only way we have of forming any idea of eternity is by going, step by step, up to the largest measures of time we know of, and so ascending, on and on, till we are lost in wonder. We can not grasp eternity, but we can learn something of it by perceiving that, rise to what portion of time we will, eternity is vaster than the vastest.

We take up, for instance, the history of our own country, and then, when we have spent months in mastering the mere outline of those great events which, in the slow course of revolving centuries, have made England what she is, her earlier ages seem so far removed from our own times that they appear to belong to a hoary and most remote antiquity. But then, when you compare those times with even the existing works of man, and when you remember that, when England was yet young in civilization, the pyramids of Egypt were already gray with 1500 years, you have got another step which impresses you with a doubled amount of vastness. Double that period, and you come to the far distant moment when the present aspect of this world was called, by creation, out of the formless void in which it was before.

Modern science has raised us to a pinnacle of thought beyond even this. It has commanded us to think of countless ages in which that formless void existed before it put on the aspect of its present creation. Millions of years before God called the light day, and the darkness night, there was, if science speaks true, creation after creation called into existence, and buried in its own ruins upon the surface of this earth. And then, there was a time beyond even this—there was a moment when this earth itself, with all its countless creations and innumerable ages, did not exist. And again, in that far back distance it is more than conceivable, it seems by the analogy of God's dealings next to certain, that ten thousand worlds may have been called into existence, and lasted their unnumbered ages, and then perished in succession. Compared with these stupendous figures, 6000 years of *our* planet sink into nothingness. The mind is lost in dwelling on such thoughts as these. When you have penetrated far, far back, by successive approximations, and still see the illimitable distance receding before you as distant as before, imagination absolutely gives way, and you feel dizzy and bewildered with new strange thoughts, that have not a name.

But this is only one aspect of the case. It looks only to time past. The same overpowering calculations wait us when we bend our eyes on that which is to come. Time stretches back immeasurably, but it also stretches on and on forever. Now it is by such a conception as this that the inspired prophet attempts to measure the immeasurable of God. All that eternity, magnificent as it is, never was without an inhabitant. Eternity means nothing by itself. It merely expresses the existence of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth it. We make a fanciful distinction between eternity and time—there is no real distinction. We are in eternity at this moment. That has begun to be with us which never began with God. Our only measure of time is by the succession of ideas. If ideas flow fast, and many sights and many thoughts pass by us, time seems lengthened. If we have the simple routine of a few engagements, the same every day, with little variety, the years roll by us so fast that we can not mark them. It is not so with God. There is no succession of ideas with Him. Every possible idea is present with Him now. It was present with Him ten thousand years ago. God's dwelling-place is that eternity which has neither past nor future, but one vast, immeasurable present.

There is a second measure given us of God in this verse. It is in respect of Space. He dwelleth in the high and lofty place. He dwelleth moreover in the most insignificant place —even the heart of man. And the idea by which the prophet would here exhibit to us the greatness of God is that of His eternal omnipresence. It is difficult to say which conception carries with it the greatest exaltation—that of boundless space or that of unbounded time. When we pass from the tame and narrow scenery of our own country, and stand on those spots of earth in which nature puts on her wilder and more awful forms, we are conscious of something of the grandeur which belongs to the thought of space. Go where the strong foundations of the earth lie around you in their massive majesty, and mountain after mountain rears its snow to heaven in a giant chain, and then, when this bursts upon you for the first time in life, there is that peculiar feeling which we call, in common language, an enlargement of ideas. But when we are told that the sublimity of those dizzy heights is but a nameless speck in comparison with the globe of which they form the girdle; and when we pass on to think of that globe itself as a minute spot in the mighty system to which it belongs, so that our world might be annihilated and its loss would not be felt; and when we are told that eighty millions of such systems roll in the world of space, to which our own system again is as nothing; and when we are again pressed with the recollection that beyond those farthest limits creative power is exerted immeasurably farther than eye can reach or thought can penetrate; then, brethren, the awe which comes upon the heart is only, after all, a tribute to a *portion* of God's greatness.

Yet we need not science to teach us this. It is the thought which oppresses very childhood—the overpowering thought of space. A child can put his head upon his hands, and think and think till it reaches in imagination some far distant barrier of the universe, and still the difficulty presents itself to his young mind, "And what is beyond that barrier?" and the only answer is, "The high and lofty place." And this, brethren, is the inward seal with which God has stamped Himself upon man's heart. If every other trace of Deity has been expunged by the fall, these two, at least, defy destruction—the thought of eternal time, and the thought of immeasurable space.

The third measure which is given us of God respects His character. His name is Holy. The chief idea which this would convey to us is separation from evil. Brethren, there is perhaps a time drawing near when those of us who shall stand at His right hand, purified from all evil taint, shall be able to comprehend absolutely what is meant by the holiness of God. At present, with hearts cleaving down to earth, and tossed by a thousand gusts of unholy passion, we can only form a dim conception *relatively* of that which it implies. None but the pure can understand purity. The chief knowledge which we have of God's holiness comes from our acquaintance with unholiness. We know what impurity is—God is *not* that. We know what injustice is—God is *not* that. We know what restlessness, and guilt, and passion are, and deceitfulness, and pride, and waywardness—all these we know. God is none of these. And this is our chief acquaintance with His character. We know what God is *not*. We scarcely can be rightly said to know, that is to feel, what God *is*. And therefore this is implied in the very name of holiness. Holiness in the Jewish sense means simply separateness. From all that is wrong, and mean, and base, our God is forever separate.

There is another way in which God gives to us a conception of what this holiness implies. Tell us of His justice, His truth, His loving-kindness. All these are cold abstractions. They convey no distinct idea of themselves to our hearts. What we wanted was, that these should be exhibited to us in tangible reality. And it is just this which God has done. He has exhibited all these attributes, not in the light of *speculation*, but in the light of *facts*. He has given us His own character in all its delicacy of coloring in the history of Christ. Love, mercy, tenderness, purity—these are no mere names when we see them brought out in the human actions of our Master. Holiness is only a shadow to our minds, till it receives shape and substance in the life of Christ. All this character of holiness is intelligible to us in Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten of the Father He hath declared Him."

There is a third light in which God's holiness is shown to us, and that is in the sternness with which He recoils from guilt. When Christ died for man, I know what God's love means; and when Jesus wept human tears over Jerusalem, I know what God's compassion means; and when the stern denunciations of Jesus rung in the Pharisees' ears, I can comprehend what God's indignation is; and when Jesus stood calm before His murderers, I have a conception of what serenity is. Brethren, revelation opens to us a scene beyond the grave when this shall be exhibited in full operation There will be an everlasting banishment from God's presence of that impurity on which the last efforts have been tried in vain. It will be a carrying out of this sentence by a law that can not be reversed—"Depart from me, ye cursed." But it is quite a mistake to suppose that this is only a matter of revelation Traces of it we have now on this side the sepulchre. Human life is full of God's recoil from sin. In the writhings of a heart which has been made to possess its own iniquities—in the dark spot which guilt leaves upon the conscience, rising up at times in a man's gayest moments, as if it will not come out—in the restlessness and the feverishness which follow the efforts of the man who has indulged habits of sin too long—in all these there is a law repelling wickedness from the presence of the Most High—which proclaims that God is holy.

Brethren, it is in these that the greatness of God consists—eternal in time—unlimited in space—unchangeable—pure in character—His serenity and His vastness arise from His own perfections.

II. We are to consider, in the second place, the greatness of man.

1. The nature of that greatness.
2. The persons who are great.

Now, this is brought before us in the text in this one fact, that man has been made a habitation of the Deity—"I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." There is in the very outset this distinction between what is great in God and what is great in man. To be independent of every thing in the universe is God's glory, and to be independent is man's shame. All that God has, He has from Himself—all that man has, he has from God. And the moment man cuts himself off from God, that moment he cuts himself off from all true grandeur.

There are two things implied in Scripture, when it is said that God dwells with man. The first is that peculiar presence which He has conferred upon the members of His church. Brethren, we presume not to define what that Presence is, and how it dwells within us—we are content to leave it as a mystery. But this we know, that something of a very peculiar and supernatural character takes place in the heart of every man upon whom the Gospel has been brought to bear with power. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" And again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians—"In Christ ye are builded for a habitation of God through the Spirit." There is something in these expressions which refuses to be explained away. They leave us but one conclusion, and that is—that in all those who have become Christ's by faith, God personally and locally has taken up His dwelling-place.

There is a second meaning attached in Scripture to the expression, God dwells in man. According to the first meaning, we understand it in the most plain and literal sense the words are capable of conveying. According to the second, we understand His dwelling in a figurative sense, implying this—that He gives an acquaintance with Himself to man. So, for instance, when Judas asked, "Lord, how is it, that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?" our Redeemer's reply was this—"If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." In the question it was asked *how* God would manifest Himself to His servants. In the answer it was shown *how* He would make His abode with them. And if the answer be any reply to the question at all, what follows is this—that God making His abode or dwelling in the heart is the same thing exactly as God's manifesting himself to the heart.

Brethren, in these two things the greatness of man consists. One is to have God so dwelling in us as to impart His character to us; and the other is to have God so dwelling in us that we recognize His presence, and know that we are His and He is ours. They are two things perfectly distinct. To *have* God in us, this is salvation; to *know* that God is in us, this is assurance.

Lastly, we inquire as to the persons who are truly great. And these the Holy Scripture has divided into two classes —those who are humble and those who are contrite in heart. Or rather, it will be observed that it is the same class of character under different circumstances. Humbleness is the frame of mind of those who are in a state of innocence, contrition of those who are in a state of repentant guilt. Brethren, let not the expression innocence be misunderstood. Innocence in its true and highest sense never existed but once upon this earth. Innocence can not be the religion of man now. But yet there are those who have walked with God from youth, not quenching the Spirit which He gave them, and who are therefore *comparatively* innocent beings. All they have to do is to go on, whereas the guilty man has to stop and turn back before he can go on. Repentance with them is the gentle work of every day, not the work of one distinct and miserable part of life. They are those whom the Lord calls just men which need no repentance, and of whom He says, "He that is clean needeth not save to wash his feet."

Now they are described here as the humble in heart. Two things are required for this state of mind. One is that a man should have a true estimate of God, and the other is that he should have a true estimate of himself.

Vain, blind man, places himself on a little corner of this planet, a speck upon a speck of the universe, and begins to form conclusions from the small fraction of God's government which he can see from thence. The astronomer looks at the laws of motion, and forgets that there must have been a First Cause to commence that motion. The surgeon looks at the materialism of his own frame, and forgets that matter can not organize itself into exquisite beauty. The metaphysician buries himself in the laws of mind, and forgets that there may be spiritual influences producing all those laws. And this, brethren, is the unhumbled spirit of philosophy— intellectual pride. Men look at Nature, but they do not look through it up to Nature's God. There is awful ignorance of God, arising from indulged sin, which produces an unhumbled heart. God may be shut out from the soul by pride of intellect or by pride of heart.

Pharaoh is placed before us in Scripture almost as a type of pride. His pride arose from ignorance of God. "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." And this was not intellectual pride; it was pride in a matter of duty. Pharaoh had been immersing his whole heart in the narrow politics of Egypt. The great problem of his day was to aggrandize his own people and prevent an insurrection of the Israelites; and that small kingdom of Egypt had been his universe. He shut his heart to the voice of justice and the voice of humanity: in other words, great in the pride of human majesty, small in the sight of the high and lofty One, he shut himself out from the knowledge of God.

The next ingredient of humbleness is, that a man must have a right estimate of himself. There is a vast amount of self-deception on this point. We say of ourselves that which we could not bear others to say of us. A man truly humbled would take it only as his due when others treated him in the way that he says that he deserves. But, my brethren, we kneel in our closets in shame for what we are, and we tell our God that the lowest place is too good for us: and then we go into the world, and if we meet with slight or disrespect, or if our opinion be not attended to, or if another be preferred before us, there is all the anguish of a galled and jealous spirit, and half the bitterness of our lives comes from this, that we are smarting from what we call the wrongs and the neglect of men. My beloved brethren, if we saw ourselves as God sees us, we should be willing to be anywhere, to be silent when others speak, to be passed by in the world's crowd, and thrust aside to make way for others. We should be willing to put others in the way of doing that which we might have got reputation for by doing ourselves. This was the temper of our Master—this is the meek and the quiet spirit, and this is the temper of the humble with whom the high and lofty One dwells.

The other class of those who are truly great are the contrite in spirit. At first sight it might be supposed that there must ever be a vast distinction between the innocent and the penitent. It was so that the elder son in the parable thought when he saw his brother restored to his father's favor. He was surprised and hurt. He had served his father these many years—his brother had wasted his substance in riotous living. But in this passage God makes no distinction. He places the humble consistent follower and the broken-hearted sinner on a level. He dwells with both—with him that is contrite, *and* with him that is humble. He sheds around them both the grandeur of His own presence, and the annals of Church history are full of exemplifications of this marvel of God's grace. By the transforming grace of Christ, men, who have done the very work of Satan, have become as conspicuous in the service of Heaven as they were once conspicuous in the career of guilt.

So indisputably has this been so, that men have drawn from such instances the perverted conclusion, that if a man is ever to be a great saint, he must first be a great sinner. God forbid, brethren, that we should ever make such an inference. But this we infer for our own encouragement, that past sin does not necessarily preclude from high attainments. We must "forget the things that are behind." We must not mourn over past years of folly as if they made saintliness impossible. Deep as we may have been in earthliness, so deep we may also be in penitence, and so high we may become in spirituality.

We have so many years the fewer to do our work in. Well, brethren, let us try to do it so much the faster. Christ can crowd the work of years into hours. He did it with the dying thief. If the man who has set out early may take his time, it certainly can not be so with *us* who have lost our time. If we have lost God's bright and happy presence by our willfulness, what then? Unrelieved sadness? Nay, brethren, calmness, purity, may have gone from our heart; but *all* is not gone yet. Just as sweetness comes from the bark of the cinnamon when it is bruised, so can the spirit of the cross of Christ bring beauty and holiness and peace out of the bruised and broken heart. God dwells with the contrite as much as with the humble.

And now, brethren, to conclude, the first inference we collect from this subject is the danger of coming into collision with such a God as our God. Day by day we commit sins of thought and word of which the dull eye of man takes no cognizance. He whose name is Holy can not pass them by. We may elude the vigilance of a human enemy and place ourselves beyond his reach. God fills all space—there is not a spot in which His piercing eye is not on us, and His uplifted hand can not find us out. Man must strike soon if he would strike at all; for opportunities pass away from him, and his victim may escape his vengeance by death. There is no passing of opportunity with God, and it is this which makes His long-suffering a solemn thing. God can wait, for He has a whole eternity before Him in which He may strike. "All things are open and naked to Him with whom we have to do."

In the next place, we are taught the heavenly character of condescension. It is not from the insignificance of man that God's dwelling with him is so strange. It is as much the glory of God to bend His attention on an atom as to uphold the universe. But the marvel is that the habitation which He has chosen for Himself is an impure one. And when He came down from His magnificence to make this world His home, still the same character of condescension was shown through all the life of Christ. Our God selected the society of the outcasts of earth, those whom none else would speak to.

Brethren, if we would be Godlike, we must follow in the same steps. Our temptation is to do exactly the reverse. We are forever wishing to obtain the friendship and the intimacy of those above us in the world. To win over men of influence to truth—to associate with men of talent and station and title. This is the world-chase, and this, brethren, is too much the religious man's chase. But if you look simply to the question of resemblance to God, then the man who makes it a habit to select that one in life to do good to, and that one in a room to speak with, whom others pass by because there is nothing either of intellect, or power, or name, to recommend him, but only humbleness, *that* man has stamped upon his heart more of heavenly similitude by condescension, than the man who has made it his business to win this world's great ones, even for the sake of truth.

Lastly, we learn the guilt of two things of which this world is full—vanity and pride. There is a distinction between these two. But the distinction consists in this, that the vain man looks for the admiration of others—the proud man requires nothing but his own. Now, it is this distinction which makes vanity despicable to us all. We can easily find out the vain man—we soon discover what it is he wants to be observed, whether it be a gift of person, or a gift of mind, or a gift of character. If he be vain of his person, his attitudes will tell the tale. If he be vain of his judgment, or his memory, or his honesty, he can not help an unnecessary parade. The world finds him out, and this is why vanity is ever looked on with contempt. So soon as we let men see that we are suppliants for their admiration, we are at their mercy. We have given them the privilege of feeling that they are above us. We have invited them to spurn us. And therefore vanity is but a thing for scorn. But it is very different with pride. No man can look down on him that is proud, for he has asked no man for any thing. They are forced to feel respect for pride, because it is thor oughly independent of them. It wraps itself up in the consequence of its own excellences, and scorns to care whether others take note of them or not.

It is just here that the danger lies. We have exalted a sin into a virtue. No man will acknowledge that he is vain, but almost any man will acknowledge that he is proud. But tried by the balance of the sanctuary, there is little to choose between the two. If a man look for greatness out of God, it matters little whether he seek it in his own applause or in the applause of others. The *proud* Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous, was condemned by Christ as severely, and even more, than the *vain* Jews who "could not believe because they sought honor from one another, and not that honor which cometh from God only." It may be a more dazzling and a more splendid sin to be proud. It is not less hateful in God's sight. Let us speak God's word to our own unquiet, swelling, burning hearts. Pride may disguise itself as it will in its own majesty, but in the presence of the high and lofty One, it is but littleness after all.

XIX.

THE LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL USE OF LAW.

A FRAGMENT.

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—1 Tim. i. 8.

It is scarcely ever possible to understand a passage without some acquaintance with the history of the circumstances under which it was written.

At Ephesus, over which Timothy was bishop, people had been bewildered by the teaching of converted Jews, who mixed the old leaven of Judaism with the new spirituality of Christianity. They maintained the perpetual obligation of the Jewish law (ver. 7). They desired to be teachers of the law. They required strict performance of a number of severe observances. They talked mysteriously of angels and powers intermediate between God and the human soul (ver. 4). The result was an interminable discussion at Ephesus. The Church was filled with disputations and controversies.

Now there is something always refreshing to see the Apostle Paul descending upon an arena of controversy, where minds have been bewildered: and so much is to be said on both sides that people are uncertain which to take. You know at once that he will pour light upon the question, and illuminate all the dark corners. You know that he will not trim, and balance, and hang doubtful, or become a partisan; but that he will seize some great principle which lies at the root of the whole controversy, and make its true bearings clear at once.

This he always does, and this he does on the present occasion (ver. 5 and 6). He does not, like a vehement polemic, say Jewish ceremonies and rules are all worthless, nor some ceremonies are worthless and others essential; but he says, the root of the whole matter is charity. If you turn aside from this, all is lost; here at once the controversy closes. So far as any rule fosters the spirit of love, that is, is used lawfully, it is wise, and has a use. So far as it does not, it is chaff. So far as it hinders it, it is poison.

Now observe how different this method is from that which is called the sober, moderate way—the *via media.* Some would have said, the great thing is to avoid extremes. If the question respects fasting, fast, only in *moderation:* if the observance of the sabbath-day, observe it on the Jewish principle, only *not so strictly.*

St. Paul, on the contrary, went down to the root; he said, The true question is not whether the law is good or bad, but on what principle; he said, You are both wrong—*you,* in saying that the observance of the law is essential, for the end of it is charity, and if *that* be got, what matter *how; you,* in saying rules may be dispensed with entirely and always, "for we know that the law is good."

I. The unlawful use, and
II. The lawful use of law.

I. The unlawful use.

Define law. By law, Paul almost always means, not the Mosaic law, but law in its essence and principle, that is, constraint. This chiefly in two forms expresses itself—1st. a custom; 2d. a maxim. As examples of custom, we might give circumcision, or the sabbath, or sacrifice, or fasting.

Law said, Thou shalt *do* these things; and law, as mere law, constrained them. Or again, law may express itself in maxims and rules.

In rules, as when law said, "Thou shalt not steal"—not saying a word about secret dishonesty of heart, but simply taking cognizance of *acts.*

In maxims, as when it admonished that man ought to give a tenth to God, leaving the principle of the matter untouched. Principle is one thing, and maxim is another. A principle requires liberality, a maxim says one-tenth. A principle says, "A merciful man is merciful to his beast," leaves mercy to the heart, and does not define how; a maxim says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn." A principle says, "Forgive;" a maxim defines "seven times;" and thus the whole law falls into two divisions:

The ceremonial law, which constrains life by customs.

The moral law, which guides life by rules and maxims.

Now it is an illegitimate use of law. First. To expect, by obedience to it, to make out a title to salvation.

By the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified. Salvation is by faith: a state of heart right with God; faith is the spring of holiness—a well of life. Salvation is not the having committed a certain number of good acts. Destruction is not the having committed a certain number of crimes. Salvation is God's Spirit in us, leading to good. Destruction is the selfish spirit in us, leading to wrong.

For a plain reason, then, obedience to law can not save, because it is merely the performance of a certain number of acts which may be done by habit, from fear, from compulsion. Obedience remains still imperfect. A man may have obeyed the rule, and kept the maxim, and yet not be perfect. "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up." "Yet lackest thou one thing." The law he had kept. The spirit of obedience in its high form of sacrifice he had not.

Secondly. To use it superstitiously.

It is plain that this was the use made of it by the Ephesian teachers (ver. 4). It seemed to them that *law* was pleasing to God as restraint. Then unnatural restraints came to be imposed—on the appetites, fasting; on the affections, celibacy. This is what Paul condemns (ch. iv., ver. 8): "Bodily exercise profiteth little."

And again, this superstition showed itself in a false reverence—wondrous stories respecting angels—respecting the eternal genealogy of Christ—awful thoughts about spirits. The apostle calls all these, very unceremoniously, "endless genealogies" (ver. 4), and "old wives' fables" (ch. iv., ver. 7).

The question at issue is, wherein true reverence consists: according to them, in the multiplicity of the objects of reverence; according to St. Paul, in the character of the object revered. . . . . God and right the true object.

But you are not a whit the better for solemn and reverential feelings about a mysterious, invisible world. To tremble before a consecrated wafer is spurious reverence. To bend before the majesty of right is Christian reverence.

Thirdly. To use it as if the letter of it were sacred. The law commanded none to eat the shew-bread except the priests. David ate it in hunger. If Abimelech had scrupled to give it he would have used the law unlawfully.

The law commanded no manner of work. The apostles in hunger rubbed the ears of corn. The Pharisees used the law unlawfully, in forbidding that.

II. The lawful use of law.

1. As a restraint to keep outward evil in check. . . . 'The law was made for sinners and profane." . . . . Illustrate this by reference to capital punishment. No sane man believes that punishment by death will make a nation's heart right, or that the sight of an execution can soften or ameliorate. Punishment does not work in that way. It is not meant for that purpose. It is meant to guard society.

The law commanding a blasphemer to be stoned could not teach one Israelite love to God, but it could save the streets of Israel from scandalous ribaldry.

And therefore, clearly understood, law is a mere check to bad men: it does not improve them; it often makes them worse; it can not sanctify them. God never intended that it should. It saves society from the open transgression; it does not contemplate the amelioration of the offender.

Hence we see for what reason the apostle insisted on the use of the law for Christians. Law never can be abrogated. Strict rules are needed exactly in proportion as we want the power or the will to rule ourselves. It is not because the Gospel has come that we are free from the law, but because, and only so far, as we are in a Gospel state. "It is for a righteous man" that the law is not made, and thus we see the true nature of Christian liberty. The liberty to which we are called in Christ is not the liberty of devils, the liberty of doing what we will, but the blessed liberty of being on the side of the law, and therefore unrestrained by it in doing right.

Illustrate from laws of coining, housebreaking, etc. We are not under them; because we may break them as we like? Nay, the moment we desire, the law is alive again to us.

2. As a primer is used by a child to acquire by degrees, principles and a spirit.

This is the use attributed to it in verse 5: "The end of the commandment is charity."

Compare with this two other passages—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness," and "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" "Perfect love casteth out fear."

In every law there is a spirit; in every maxim a principle; and the law and the maxim are laid down for the sake of conserving the spirit and the principle which they enshrine.

St. Paul compares God's dealing with man to a wise parent's instruction of his child—see the Epistle to the Galatians. Boyhood is under law; you appeal not to the boy's reason, but his will, by rewards and punishments: Do this, and I will reward you; do it not, and you will be punished. So long as a man is under law this is salutary and necessary, but only while under law. He is free when he discerns principles, and at the same time has got, by habit, the will to obey. So that rules have done for him a double work, taught him the principle and facilitated obedience to it.

Distinguish, however. In point of time, law is first—in point of importance, the Spirit.

In point of *time*, charity is the "end" of the commandment —in point of *importance*, first and foremost.

The first thing a boy has to do is to learn implicit obedience to rules. The first thing in importance for a man to learn is, to sever himself from maxims, rules, laws. Why? That he may become an Antinomian, or a Latitudinarian? No. He is severed from submission to the *maxim* because he has got allegiance to the *principle.* He is free from the rule and the law because he has got the Spirit written in his heart.

This is the Gospel. A man is redeemed by Christ so far as he is not under the law; he is free from the law so far as he is free from the evil which the law restrains; he progresses so far as there is no evil in him which it is an effort to keep down; and perfect salvation and liberty are when we—who, though having the first-fruits of the Spirit, yet groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, "to wit, the redemption of our body"—shall have been freed in body, soul, and spirit, from the last traces of the evil which can only be kept down by force. In other words, so far as Christ's statement is true of *us*, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

XX.

THE PRODIGAL AND HIS BROTHER.

"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—Luke xv. 31, 32.

THERE are two classes of sins. There are some sins by which man crushes, wounds, malevolently injures his brother man: those sins which speak of a bad, tyrannical, and selfish heart. Christ met those with denunciation. There are other sins by which a man injures himself. There is a life of reckless indulgence; there is a career of yielding to ungovernable propensities, which most surely conducts to wretchedness and ruin, but makes a man an object of compassion rather than of condemnation.

The reception which sinners of this class met from Christ was marked by strange and pitying mercy. There was no maudlin sentiment on His lips. He called sin sin, and guilt guilt. But yet there were sins which His lips scourged, and others over which, containing in themselves their own scourge, His heart bled. That which was melancholy, and marred, and miserable in this world, was more congenial to the heart of Christ than that which was proudly happy. It was in the midst of a triumph, and all the pride of a procession, that He paused to weep over ruined Jerusalem. And if we ask the reason why the character of Christ was marked by this melancholy condescension, it is that He was in the midst of a world of ruins, and there was nothing there to gladden, but very much to touch with grief. He was here to restore that which was broken down and crumbling into decay. An enthusiastic antiquarian, standing amidst the fragments of an ancient temple surrounded by dust and moss, broken pillar and defaced architrave, with magnificent projects in his mind of restoring all this to *former* majesty, to draw out to light from mere rubbish the ruined glories, and therefore stooping down amongst the dank ivy and the rank nettles; such was Christ amidst the wreck of human nature. He was striving to lift it out of its degradation. He was searching out in revolting places that which had fallen down, that He might build it up again in fair proportions, a holy temple to the Lord.

Therefore He labored among the guilty; therefore He was the companion of outcasts; therefore He spoke tenderly and lovingly to those whom society counted undone; therefore He loved to bind up the bruised and the broken-hearted; therefore His breath fanned the spark which seemed dying out in the wick of the expiring taper, when men thought that it was too late, and that the hour of *hopeless* profligacy was come. It was that feature in His character, that tender, hoping, encouraging spirit of His which the prophet Isaiah fixed upon as a characteristic. "A bruised reed will He not break."

It was an illustration of this spirit which He gave in the parable which forms the subject of our consideration to-day. We find the occasion which drew it from Him in the commencement of this chapter, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." It was then that Christ condescended to offer an excuse or an explanation of his conduct. And His excuse was this: It is natural, humanly natural, to rejoice more over that which has been recovered than over that which has been never lost. He proved that by three illustrations taken from human life. The first illustration intended to show the feelings of Christ in winning back a sinner, was the joy which the shepherd feels in the recovery of a sheep from the mountain wilderness. The second was the satisfaction which a person feels for a recovered coin. The last was the gladness which attends the restoration of an erring son.

Now the three parables are alike in this, that they all describe more or less vividly the feelings of the Redeemer on the recovery of the lost. But the third parable differs from the other two in this, that besides the feelings of the Saviour, it gives us a multitude of particulars respecting the feelings, the steps, and the motives of the penitent who is reclaimed back to goodness. In the first two the thing lost is a coin or a sheep. It would not be possible to find any picture of remorse or gladness there. But in the third parable the thing lost is not a lifeless thing, nor a mute thing, but a being, the workings of whose human heart are all described. So that the subject opened out to us is a more extensive one—not merely the feelings of the finder, God in Christ, but besides that, the sensations of the wanderer himself.

In dealing with this parable, this is the line which we shall adopt. We shall look at the picture which it draws of —1. God's treatment of the penitent. 2. God's expostulation with the saint. God's treatment of the penitent divides itself in this parable into three distinct epochs. The period of alienation, the period of repentance, and the circumstances of a penitent reception. We shall consider all these in turn.

The first truth exhibited in this parable is the alienation of man's heart from God. Homelessness, distance from our Father—that is man's state by nature in this world. The youngest son gathered all together and took his journey into a *far* country. Brethren, this is the history of worldliness. It is a state far from God; in other words, it is a state of homelessness. And now let us ask what that means. To English hearts it is not necessary to expound elaborately the infinite meanings which cluster round that blessed expression, "home." Home is the one place in all this world where hearts are sure of each other. It is the place of confidence. It is the place where we tear off that mask of guarded and suspicious coldness which the world forces us to wear in self-defense, and where we pour out the unreserved communications of full and confiding hearts. It is the spot where expressions of tenderness gush out without any sensation of awkwardness and without any dread of ridicule. Let a man travel where he will, home is the place to which "his heart untravelled fondly turns." He is to double all pleasure there. He is there to divide all pain. A *happy home* is the single spot of rest which a man has upon this earth for the cultivation of his noblest sensibilities.

And now, my brethren, if that be the description of home, is God's place of rest your home? Walk abroad and alone by night. That awful other world in the stillness and the solemn deep of the eternities above, is it your home? Those graves that lie beneath you, holding in them the infinite secret, and stamping upon all earthly loveliness the mark of frailty and change and fleetingness—are those graves the prospect to which in bright days and dark days you can turn without dismay? God in his splendors—dare we feel with Him affectionate and familiar, so that trial comes softened by this feeling—it is my Father, and enjoyment can be taken with a frank feeling; my Father has given it me, without grudging, to make me happy? All that is having a home in God. Are we at home there? Why, there is demonstration in our very childhood that we are not at home with that other world of God's. An infant fears to be alone, because he feels he is not alone. He trembles in the dark, because he is conscious of the presence of the world of spirits. Long before he has been told tales of terror, there is an instinctive dread of the supernatural in the infant mind. It is the instinct which we have from childhood that gives us the feeling of another world. And mark, brethren, if the child is not at home in the thought of that world of God's, the deep of darkness and eternity is around him—God's home, but not his home, for his flesh creeps. And that feeling grows through life; not the fear—when the child becomes a man he gets over fear—but the dislike. The man feels as much aversion as the child for the world of spirits.

Sunday comes. It breaks across the current of his worldliness. It suggests thoughts of death and judgment and everlasting existence. Is that home? Can the worldly man feel Sunday like a foretaste of his Father's mansion? If we could but know how many have come here to-day, not to have their souls lifted up heavenward, but from curiosity, or idleness, or criticism, it would give us an appalling estimate of the number who are living in a far country, "having no hope, and without God in the world."

The second truth conveyed to us in this parable is the unsatisfying nature of worldly happiness. The outcast son tried to satiate his appetite with husks. A husk is an empty thing; it is a thing which looks extremely like food, and promises as much as food; but it is not food. It is a thing which when chewed will stay the appetite, but leaves the emaciated body without nourishment. Earthly happiness is a husk. We say not that there is no satisfaction in the pleasures of a worldly life. That would be an over-statement of the truth. Something there is, or else why should men persist in living for them? The cravings of man's appetite may be stayed by things which can not satisfy him. Every new pursuit contains in it a new hope; and it is long before hope is bankrupt. But, my brethren, it is strange if a man has not found out, long before he has reached the age of thirty, that every thing here is empty and disappointing. The nobler his heart and the more unquenchable his hunger for the high and the good, the sooner will he find that out. Bubble after bubble bursts, each bubble tinted with the celestial colors of the rainbow, and each leaving in the hand which crushes it a cold damp drop of disappointment. All that is described in Scripture by the emphatic metaphor of "sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind," the whirlwind of blighted hopes and unreturned feelings and crushed expectations—that is the harvest which the world gives you to reap.

And now is the question asked, Why is this world unsatisfying? Brethren, it is the grandeur of the soul which God has given us, which makes it insatiable in its desires—with an infinite void which can not be filled up. A soul which was made for God, how can the world fill it? If the ocean can be still with miles of unstable waters beneath it, then the soul of man, rocking itself upon its own deep longings, with the Infinite beneath it, may rest. We were created once in majesty, to find enjoyment in God, and if our hearts are empty now, there is nothing for it but to fill up the hollowness of the soul with God.

Let not that expression—filling the soul with God—pass away without a distinct meaning. God is love and goodness. Fill the soul with goodness, and fill the soul with love, *that* is the filling it with God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. There is nothing else that can satisfy. So that when we hear men of this world acknowledge, as they sometimes will do, when they are wearied with this phantom chase of life, sick of gayeties and tired of toil, that it is not in their pursuits that they can drink the fount of blessedness; and when we see them, instead of turning aside either broken-hearted or else made wise, still persisting to trust to expectations—at fifty, sixty, or seventy years, still feverish about some new plan of ambition—what we see is this: we see a soul formed with a capacity for high and noble things, fit for the banquet-table of God Himself, trying to fill its infinite hollowness with husks.

Once more: there is degradation in the life of irreligion. The things which the wanderer tried to live on were not husks only. They were husks which the swine did eat. Degradation means the application of a thing to purposes lower than that for which it was intended. It is degradation to a man to live on husks, because these are not his true food. We call it degradation when we see the members of an ancient family, decayed by extravagance, working for their bread. It is not degradation for a born laborer to work for an honest livelihood. It is degradation for them, for they are not what they might have been. And therefore, for a man to be degraded, it is not necessary that he should have given himself up to low and mean practices. It is quite enough that he is living for purposes lower than those for which God intended him. He may be a man of unblemished reputation, and yet debased in the truest meaning of the word. We were sent into this world to love God and to love man; to do good—to fill up life with deeds of generosity and usefulness. And he that refuses to work out that high destiny is a degraded man. He may turn away revolted from every thing that is gross. His sensuous indulgences may be all marked by refinement and taste. His house may be filled with elegance. His library may be adorned with books. There may be the sounds in his mansion which can regale the ear, the delicacies which can stimulate the palate, and the forms of beauty which can please the eye. There may be nothing in his whole life to offend the most chastened and fastidious delicacy; and yet, if the history of all this be, powers which were meant for eternity frittered upon time, the man is degraded—if the spirit which was created to find its enjoyment in the love of God has settled down satisfied with the love of the world, then, just as surely as the sensualist of this parable, that man has turned aside from a celestial feast to prey on garbage.

We pass on to the second period of the history of God's treatment of a sinner. It is the period of his coming to himself, or what we call repentance. The first fact of religious experience which this parable suggests to us is that common truth—men desert the world when the world deserts them. The renegade came to himself when there were no more husks to eat. He would have remained away if he could have got them, but it is written, "no man gave unto him." And this, brethren, is the record of our shame. Invitation is not enough; we must be driven to God. And the famine comes not by chance. God sends the famine into the soul—the hunger, and thirst, and the disappointment—to bring back his erring child again.

Now the world fastens upon that truth, and gets out of it a triumphant sarcasm against religion. They tell us that just as the caterpillar passes into the chrysalis, and the chrysalis into the butterfly, so profligacy passes into disgust, and disgust passes into religion. To use their own phraseology, when people become disappointed with the world it is the last resource, they say, to turn saint. So the men of the world speak, and they think they are profoundly philosophical and concise in the account they give. The world is welcome to its very small sneer. It is the glory of our Master's Gospel that it *is* the refuge of the broken-hearted. It is the strange mercy of our God that He does not reject the writhings of a jaded heart. Let the world curl its lip if it will, when it sees through the causes of the prodigal's return. And if the sinner does not come to God taught by this disappointment, what then? If affections crushed in early life have driven one man to God; if wrecked and ruined hopes have made another man religious; if want of success in a profession has broken the spirit; if the human life lived out too passionately has left a surfeit and a craving behind which end in seriousness; if one is brought by the sadness of widowed life, and another by the forced desolation of involuntary single life; if when the mighty famine comes into the heart, and not a husk is left, not a pleasure untried, then, and not till then, the remorseful resolve is made, "I will arise and go to my Father:"—well, brethren, what then? Why this, that the history of penitence, produced as it so often is by mere disappointment, sheds only a brighter lustre round the love of Christ, who rejoices to receive such wanderers, worthless as they are, back into His bosom. Thank God, the world's sneer is true. It *is* the last resource to turn saint. Thanks to our God that when this gaudy world has ceased to charm, when the heart begins to feel its hollowness, and the world has lost its satisfying power, still all is not yet lost, if penitence and Christ remain, to still, to humble, and to soothe a heart which sin has fevered.

There is another truth contained in this section of the parable. After a life of wild sinfulness, religion is servitude at first, not freedom. Observe, he went back to duty with the feelings of a slave: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Any one who has lived in the excitement of the world, and then tried to settle down at once to quiet duty, knows how true that is. To borrow a metaphor from Israel's desert life, it is a tasteless thing to live on manna after you have been feasting upon quails. It is a dull cold drudgery to find pleasure in simple occupation when life has been a succession of strong emotions. Sonship it is not; it is slavery. A son obeys in love, entering heartily into his father's meaning. A servant obeys mechanically, rising early because he must; doing, it may be, his duty well, but feeling in all its force the irksomeness of the service. Sonship does not come all at once. The yoke of Christ is easy, the burden of Christ is light; but it is not light to every body. It is light when you love it, and no man who has sinned much can love it all at once.

Therefore, if I speak to any one who is trying to be religious, and heavy in heart because his duty is done too formally, my Christian brother, fear not. You are returning, like the prodigal, with the feelings of a servant. Still it is a real return. The spirit of adoption will come afterwards. You will often have to do duties which you can not relish, and in which you see no meaning. So it was with Naaman at the prophet's command. He bathed, not knowing why he was bidden to bathe, in Jordan. When you bend to prayer, often and often you will have to kneel with wandering thoughts, and constraining lips to repeat words into which your heart scarcely enters. You will have to perform duties when the heart is cold, and without a spark of enthusiasm to warm you. But, my Christian brother, onward still. Struggle to the cross, even though it be struggling as in chains. Just as on a day of clouds, when you have watched the distant hills, dark and gray with mist, suddenly a gleam of sunshine passing over reveals to you, in that flat surface, valleys and dells and spots of sunny happiness, which slept before unsuspected in the fog, so in the gloom of penitential life there will be times when God's deep peace and love will be felt shining into the soul with supernatural refreshment. Let the penitent be content with the servant's lot at first. Liberty and peace, and the bounding sensations of a Father's arms around you, come afterwards.

The last circumstance in this division of our subject is the reception which a sinner meets with on his return to God. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." This banquet represents to us two things. It tells of the father's gladness on his son's return. That represents God's joy on the reformation of a sinner. It tells of a banquet and a dance given to the long-lost son. That represents the sinner's gladness when he first understood that God was reconciled to him in Christ. There is a strange, almost wild, rapture, a strong gush of love and happiness in those days which are called the days of the first conversion. When a man who has sinned much—a profligate—turns to God, and it becomes first clear to his apprehension that there is love instead of spurning for him, there is a luxury of emotion—a banquet of tumultuous blessedness in the moment of first love to God, which stands alone in life, nothing before and nothing after like it. And, brethren, let us observe: This forgiveness is a thing granted while a man is yet afar off. We are not to wait for the right of being happy till we are good: we might wait forever. Joy is not delayed till we deserve it. Just so soon as a sinful man trusts that the mercy of God in Christ has done away with his transgression, the ring, and the robe, and the shoes are his, the banquet and the light of a Father's countenance.

Lastly, we have to consider very briefly God's expostulation with a saint. There is another brother mentioned in this parable, who expressed something like indignation at the treatment which his brother met with. There are commentators who have imagined that this personage represents the Pharisees who complained that Jesus was receiving sinners. But this is manifestly impossible, because his father expostulates with him in this language, "Son, thou art ever with me;" not for one moment could that be true of the Pharisees. The true interpretation seems to be that this elder brother represents a real Christian perplexed with God's mysterious dealings. We have before us the description of one of those happy persons who have been filled with the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb, and on the whole (with imperfections of course) remained God's servant all his life. For this is his own account of himself, which the father does not contradict. "Lo! these many years do I serve thee."

We observe, then, the objection made to the reception of a notorious sinner—"Thou never gavest me a kid." Now, in this we have a fact true to Christian experience. Joy seems to be felt more vividly and more exuberantly by men who have sinned much, than by men who have grown up consistently from childhood with religious education. Rapture belongs to him whose sins, which are forgiven, are many. In the perplexity which this fact occasions, there is a feeling which is partly right and partly wrong. There is a surprise which is natural. There is a resentful jealousy which is to be rebuked.

There is first of all a natural surprise. It was natural that the elder brother should feel perplexed and hurt. When a sinner seems to be rewarded with more happiness than a saint, it appears as if good and evil were alike undistinguished in God's dealings. It seems like putting a reconciled enemy over the head of a tried servant. It looks as if it were a kind of encouragement held out to sin, and a man begins to feel, Well, if this is to be the caprice of my father's dealing; if this rich feast of gladness be the reward of a licentious life, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." This is natural surprise.

But besides this there is a jealousy in these sensations of ours which God sees fit to rebuke. You have been trying to serve God all your life, and find it struggle, and heaviness, and dullness still. You see another who has outraged every obligation of life, and he is not tried by the deep prostration you think he ought to have, but bright with happiness at once. You have been making sacrifices all your life, and your worst trials come out of your most generous sacrifices. Your errors in judgment have been followed by sufferings sharper than those which crime itself could have brought. And you see men who never made a sacrifice unexposed to trial—men whose life has been rapture purchased by the ruin of others' innocence—tasting first the pleasures of sin, and then the banquet of religion. You have been a moral man from childhood, and yet with all your efforts you feel the crushing conviction that it has never once been granted you to win a soul to God. And you see another man marked by inconsistency and impetuosity, banqueting every day upon the blest success of impressing and saving souls. All that is startling. And then comes sadness and despondency; then come all those feelings which are so graphically depicted here: irritation—"he was angry;" swelling pride—"he would not go in;" jealousy, which required soothing—"his father went out and entreated him."

And now, brethren, mark the father's answer. It does not account for this strange dealing by God's sovereignty. It does not cut the knot of the difficulty, instead of untying it, by saying, God has a *right* to do what He will. He does not urge, God has a right to act on favoritism if He please. But it assigns two reasons. The first reason is, "It was *meet*, right that we should make merry." It is meet that God should be glad on the reclamation of a sinner. It is meet that that sinner, looking down into the dreadful chasm over which he had been tottering, should feel a shudder of delight through all his frame on thinking of his escape. And it is meet that religious men should not feel jealous of one another, but freely and generously join in thanking God that others have got happiness, even if *they* have not. The spirit of religious exclusiveness, which looks down contemptuously instead of tenderly on worldly men, and banishes a man forever from the circle of its joys because he has sinned notoriously, is a bad spirit.

Lastly, the reason given for this dealing is, "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine." By which Christ seems to tell us that the disproportion between man and man is much less than we suppose. The profligate had had one hour of ecstasy—the other had had a whole life of peace. A consistent Christian may not have rapture; but he has that which is much better than rapture: calmness—God's serene and perpetual presence. And after all, brethren, that is the best. One to whom much is forgiven has much joy. He must have it, if it were only to support him through those fearful trials which are to come—those haunting reminiscences of a polluted heart—those frailties—those inconsistencies to which the habits of past indulgence have made him liable. A terrible struggle is in store for him yet. Grudge him not one hour of unclouded exultation. But religion's best gift—rest, serenity—the quiet daily love of one who lives perpetually with his Father's family—uninterrupted usefulness—*that* belongs to him who has lived steadily, and walked with duty, neither grieving nor insulting the Holy Spirit of his God. The man who serves God early has the best of it; joy is well in its way, but a few flashes of joy are trifles in comparison with a life of peace. Which is best: the flash of joy lighting up the whole heart, and then darkness till the next flash comes—or the steady calm sunlight of day in which men work?

And now, one word to those who are living this young man's life—thinking to become religious, as he did, when they have got tired of the world. I speak to those who are leading what, in the world's softened language of concealment, is called a gay life. Young brethren, let two motives be urged earnestly upon your attention. The first is the motive of mere honorable feeling. We will say nothing about the uncertainty of life. We will not dwell upon this fact, that impressions resisted now may never come back again. We will not appeal to terror. That is not the weapon which a Christian minister loves to use. If our lips were clothed with thunder, it is not denunciation which makes men Christians; let the appeal be made to every high and generous feeling in a young man's bosom.

Deliberately and calmly you are going to do *this:* to spend the best and most vigorous portion of your days in idleness, in uselessness, in the gratification of self, in the contamination of others. And then weakness, the relics and the miserable dregs of life—you are going to give *that* sorry offering to God, because His mercy endureth forever! Shame—shame upon the heart which can let such a plan rest in it one moment. If it be there, crush it like a man. It is a degrading thing to enjoy husks till there is no man to give them. It is a base thing to resolve to give to God as little as possible, and not to serve Him till you must.

Young brethren, I speak principally to you. You have health for God now. You have strength of mind and body. You have powers which may fit you for real usefulness. You have appetites for enjoyment which can be consecrated to God. You acknowledge the law of honor. Well, then, by every feeling of manliness and generosity remember this: now, and not later, is your time to learn what religion means.

There is another motive, and a very solemn one, to be urged upon those who are delaying. Every moment of delay adds bitterness to after-struggles. The moment of a feeling of hired servitude must come. If a man will not obey God with a warm heart, he may hereafter have to do it with a cold one. To be holy is the work of a long life. The experience of ten thousand lessons teaches only a little of it; and all this, the work of becoming like God, the man who delays is crowding into the space of a few years or a few months. When we have lived long a life of sin, do we think that repentance and forgiveness will obliterate all the traces of sin upon the character? Be sure that every sin pays its price: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Oh! there are recollections of past sin which come crowding up to the brain, with temptation in them. There are old habits which refuse to be mastered by a few enthusiastic sensations. There is so much of the old man clinging to the penitent who has waited long—he is so much, as a religious man, like what he was when he was a worldly man—that it is doubtful whether he ever reaches in this world the full stature of Christian manhood. Much warm earnestness, but strange inconsistencies—that is the character of one who is an old man and a young Christian. Brethren, do we wish to risk all this? Do we want to learn holiness with terrible struggles, and sore affliction, and the plague of much remaining evil? Then *wait* before you turn to God.

XXI.

JOHN'S REBUKE OF HEROD.

"But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison."—Luke iii. 19, 20.

The life of John the Baptist divides itself into three distinct periods. Of the first we are told almost nothing, but we may conjecture much. We are told that he was in the deserts till his showing unto Israel. It was a period, probably, in which, saddened by the hollowness of all life in Israel, and perplexed with the controversies of Jerusalem, the controversies of Sadducee with Pharisee, of formalist with mystic, of the disciples of one infallible rabbi with the disciples of another infallible rabbi, he fled for refuge to the wilderness, to see whether God could not be found there by the heart that sought Him, without the aid of churches, rituals, creeds, and forms. This period lasted thirty years.

The second period is a shorter one. It comprises the few months of his public ministry. His difficulties were over; he had reached conviction enough to live and die on. He knew not all, but he knew something. He could not baptize with the Spirit, but he could at least baptize with water. It was not given to him to build up, but it was given to him to pull down all false foundations. He knew that the highest truth of spiritual life was to be given by One that should come after. What he had learned in the desert was contained in a few words—Reality lies at the root of religious life. Ye must be real, said John. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Let each man do his own duty; let the rich impart to those who are not rich; let the publican accuse no man falsely; let the soldier be content with his wages. The coming kingdom is not a mere piece of machinery which will make you all good and happy without effort of your own. Change yourselves, or you will have no kingdom at all. Personal reformation, personal reality, *that* was John's message to the world.

It was an incomplete one; but he delivered it as his all, manfully; and his success was signal, astonishing even to himself. Successful it was, because it appealed to all the deepest wants of the human heart. It told of peace to those who had been agitated by tempestuous passion. It promised forgetfulness of past transgression to those whose consciences smarted with self-accusing recollections. It spoke of refuge from the wrath to come to those who had felt it a fearful expectation to fall into the hands of an angry God. And the result of that message, conveyed by the symbol of baptism, was that the desert swarmed with crowds who owned the attractive spell of the power of a new life made possible. Warriors, paupers, profligates—some admiring the nobleness of religious life, others needing it to fill up the empty hollow of an unsatisfied heart; the penitent, the heart-broken, the worldly, and the disappointed, all came. And with them there came two other classes of men, whose approach roused the Baptist to astonishment.

The formalist, not satisfied with his formality, and the infidel, unable to rest on his infidelity—they came too—startled, for one hour at least, to the real significance of life, and shaken out of unreality. The Baptist's message wrung the confession from their souls: "Yes, our system will not do. We are not happy, after all; we are miserable. Prophet, whose solitary life, far away there in the desert, has been making to itself a home in the mysterious and the invisible, what hast thou got to tell us from that awful other world? What are we to do?"

These things belong to a period of John's life anterior to the text. The prophet has been hitherto in a self-selected solitude, the free wild desert, opening his heart to the strange sights and sounds through which the grand voice of oriental nature speaks of God to the soul, in a way that books can not speak.

We have arrived at the third period of his history. We are now to consider him as the tenant of a *compelled* solitude, in the dungeon of a capricious tyrant. Hitherto, by that rugged energy with which he battled with the temptations of this world, he has been shedding a glory round human life. We are now to look at him equally alone; equally majestic, shedding by martyrdom almost a brighter glory round human death. He has hitherto been receiving the homage of almost unequalled popularity. We are now to observe him reft of every admirer, every soother, every friend. He has been hitherto overcoming the temptations of existence by entire seclusion from them all. We are now to ask how he will stem those seductions when he is brought into the very midst of them, and the whole outward aspect of his life has laid aside its distinctive and peculiar character; when he has ceased to be the anchorite, and has become the idol of court.

Much instruction, brethren, there ought to be in all this, if we only knew rightly how to bring it out, or even to paint in any thing like intelligible colors the picture which our own minds have formed. Instructive, because human life must ever be instructive. How a human spirit contrived to get its life accomplished in this confused world: what a man like us, and yet no common man, felt, did, suffered; how he fought, and how he conquered; if we could only get a clear possession and firm grasp of *that*, we should have got almost all that is worth having in truth, with the technicalities stripped off, for what is the use of truth except to teach man how to live? There is a vast value in genuine biography. It is good to have real views of what life is, and what Christian life may be. It is good to familiarize ourselves with the history of those whom God has pronounced the salt of the earth. We can not help contracting good from such association.

And just one thing respecting this man whom we are to follow for some time to-day. Let us not be afraid of seeming to rise into a mere enthusiastic panegyric of a man. It is a rare man we have to deal with, one of God's heroic ones, a true conqueror; one whose life and motives it is hard to understand without feeling warmly and enthusiastically about them; one of the very highest characters, rightly understood, of all the Bible. Panegyric such as we can give, what is it after he has been stamped by his Master's eulogy—"A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." In the verse which is to serve us for our guidance on this subject there are two branches which will afford us fruit of contemplation. It is written, "Herod being *reproved* by John for Herodias."

Here is our first subject of thought. The truthfulness of Christian character.

And then next, he "shut up John in prison."

Here is our second topic. The apparent failure of religious life.

The point which we have to look at in this section of the Baptist's life is the truthfulness of religious character. For the prophet was now in a sphere of life altogether new. He had got to the third act of his history. The first was performed right manfully in the desert—that is past. He has now become a known man, celebrated through the country, brought into the world, great men listening to him, and in the way, if he chooses it, to become familiar with the polished life of Herod's court. For this we read: Herod observed John, that is, cultivated his acquaintance, paid him marked attention, heard him, did many things at his bidding, and heard him gladly.

For thirty long years John had lived in that far-off desert, filling his soul with the grandeur of solitude, content to be unknown, not conscious, most likely, that there was any thing supernatural in him—living with the mysterious God in silence. And then came the day when the qualities, so secretly nursed, became known in the great world: men felt that there was a greater than themselves before them, and then came the trial of admiration, when the crowds congregated round to listen. And all that trial John bore uninjured, for when those vast crowds dispersed at night, he was left alone with God and the universe once more. That prevented his being spoilt by flattery. But now comes the great trial. John is transplanted from the desert to the town: he has quitted simple life; he has come to artificial life. John has won a king's attention, and now the question is, Will the diamond of the mine bear polishing without breaking into shivers? Is the iron prophet melting into voluptuous softness? Is he getting the world's manners and the world's courtly insincerity? Is he becoming artificial through his change of life? My Christian brethren, we find nothing of the kind. There he stands in Herod's voluptuous court the prophet of the desert still, unseduced by blandishment from his high loyalty, and fronting his patron and his prince with the stern unpalatable truth of God.

It is refreshing to look on such a scene as this—the highest, the very highest moment, I think, in all John's history; higher than his ascetic life. For after all, ascetic life such as he had led before, when he fed on locusts and wild honey, is hard only in the first resolve. When you have once made up your mind to that, it becomes a habit to live alone. To lecture the poor about religion is not hard. To speak of unworldliness to men with whom we do not associate, and who do not see *our* daily inconsistencies, *that* is not hard. To speak contemptuously of the world when we have no power of commanding its admiration, *that* is not difficult. But when God has given a man accomplishments or powers which would enable him to shine in society, and he can still be firm, and steady, and uncompromisingly true; when he can be as undaunted before the rich as before the poor; when rank and fashion can not subdue him into silence: when he hates moral evil as sternly in a great man as he would in a peasant, there is truth in that man. This was the test to which the Baptist was submitted.

And now contemplate him for a moment; forget that he is an historical personage, and remember that he was a man like us. Then comes the trial. All the habits and rules of polite life would be whispering such advice as this: "Only keep your remarks within the limits of politeness. If you can not approve, be silent; you can do no good by finding fault with the great." We know how the whole spirit of a man like John would have revolted at that. Imprisonment? Yes. Death? Well, a man can die but once—any thing, but not cowardice—not meanness—not pretending what I do not feel, and disguising what I do feel. Brethren, death is not the worst thing in this life; it is not difficult to die—five minutes and the sharpest agony is past. The worst thing in this life is cowardly untruthfulness. Let men be rough, if they will, let them be unpolished, but let Christian men in all they say be sincere. No flattery, no speaking smoothly to a man before his face, while all the time there is a disapproval of his conduct in the heart. The thing we want in Christianity is not politeness, it is sincerity.

There are three things which we remark in this truthfulness of John. The first is its straightforwardness, the second is its unconsciousness, and the last its unselfishness. The straightforwardness is remarkable in this circumstance, that there is no indirect coming to the point. At once, without circumlocution, the true man speaks. "It is not lawful for thee to have her." There are some men whom God has gifted with a rare simplicity of heart, which makes them utterly incapable of pursuing the subtle excuses which can be made for evil. There is in John no morbid sympathy for the offender: "It is not lawful." He does not say, "It is *best* to do otherwise; it is unprofitable for your own happiness to live in this way." He says plainly, "It is wrong for you to do this evil."

Earnest men in this world have no time for subtleties and casuistry. Sin is detestable, horrible, in God's sight, and when once it has been made clear that it is not lawful, a Christian has nothing to do with toleration of it. If we dare not tell our patron of his sin we must give up his patronage. In the next place, there was unconsciousness in John's rebuke. We remark, brethren, that he was utterly ignorant that he was doing a fine thing. There was no sidelong glance, as in a mirror, of admiration for himself. He was not feeling, This is brave. He never stopped to feel that after-ages would stand by, and look at that deed of his, and say, "Well done." His reproof comes out as the natural impulse of an earnest heart. John was the last of all men to feel that he had done any thing extraordinary. And this we hold to be an inseparable mark of truth. No true man is conscious that he is true; he is rather conscious of insincerity. No brave man is conscious of his courage; bravery is *natural* to him. The skin of Moses's face shone after he had been with God, but Moses wist not of it.

There are many of us who would have prefaced that rebuke with a long speech. We should have begun by observing how difficult it was to speak to a monarch, how delicate the subject, how much proof we were giving of our friendship. We should have asked the great man to accept it as a proof of our devotion. John does nothing of this. Prefaces betray anxiety about self; John was not thinking of himself. He was thinking of God's offended law, and the guilty king's soul. Brethren, it is a lovely and a graceful thing to see men natural. It is beautiful to see men sincere without being haunted with the consciousness of their sincerity. There is a sickly habit that men get of looking into themselves, and thinking how they are appearing. We are always unnatural when we do that. The very tread of one who is thinking how he appears to others, becomes dizzy with affectation. He is too conscious of what he is doing, and self-consciousness is affectation. Let us aim at being natural. And we can only become natural by thinking of God and duty, instead of the way in which we are serving God and duty.

There was, lastly, something exceedingly unselfish in John's truthfulness. We do not build much on a man's being merely true. It costs some men nothing to be true, for they have none of those sensibilities which shrink from inflicting pain. There is a surly, bitter way of speaking truth which says little for a man's heart. Some men have not delicacy enough to feel that it is an awkward and a painful thing to rebuke a brother: they are in their element when they can become censors of the great. John's truthfulness was not like that. It was the earnest loving nature of the man which made him say sharp things. Was it to gratify spleen that he reproved Herod for all the evils he had done? Was it to minister to a diseased and disappointed misanthropy? Little do we understand the depth of tenderness which there is in a rugged, true nature, if we think that. John's whole life was an iron determination to crush self in every thing.

Take a single instance. John's ministry was gradually superseded by the ministry of Christ. It was the moon waning before the Sun. They came and told him that, "Rabbi, He to whom thou barest witness beyond Jordan baptizeth, and all men come unto Him." Two of his own personal friends, apparently some of the last he had left, deserted him, and went to the new teacher.

And now let us estimate the keenness of that trial. Remember John was a man: he had tasted the sweets of influence; that influence was dying away, and just in the prime of life he was to become *nothing.* Who can not conceive the keenness of that trial? Bearing that in mind, what is the prophet's answer? One of the most touching sentences in all Scripture—calmly, meekly, the hero recognizes his destiny—"He must increase, but I must decrease." He does more than recognize it—he rejoices in it, rejoices to be nothing, to be forgotten, despised, so as only Christ can be every thing. "The friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth because he heareth the bridegroom's voice, this my joy is fulfilled." And it is *this* man, with self so thoroughly crushed—the outward self by bodily austerities, the inward self by Christian humbleness—it is this man who speaks so sternly to his sovereign. "It is not lawful." Was there any gratification of human feeling there? Or was not the rebuke unselfish? Meant for God's honor, dictated by the uncontrollable hatred of all evil, careless altogether of personal consequences?

Now it is this, my brethren, that *we* want. The world-spirit can rebuke as sharply as the Spirit which was in John; the world-spirit can be severe upon the great when it is jealous. The worldly man can not bear to hear of another's success, he can not endure to hear another praised for accomplishments, or another succeeding in a profession, and the world can fasten very bitterly upon a neighbor's faults, and say, "It is not lawful." We expect that in the world. But that this should creep among religious men, that *we* should be bitter—that we, *Christians*, should suffer jealousy to enthrone itself in our hearts—that we should find fault from spleen, and not from love—that we should not be able to be calm and gentle, and sweet-tempered, when we decrease, when our powers fail—*that* is the shame. The love of Christ is intended to make such men as John such high and heavenly characters. What is our Christianity worth if it can not teach us a truthfulness, an unselfishness, and a generosity beyond the world's?

We are to say something, in the second place, of the apparent failure of Christian life.

The concluding sentence of this verse informs us that John was shut up in prison. And the first thought which suggests itself is, that a magnificent career is cut short too soon. At the very outset of ripe and experienced manhood the whole thing ends in failure. John's day of active usefulness is over; at thirty years of age his work is done; and what permanent effect have all his labors left? The crowds that listened to his voice, awed into silence by Jordan's side, we hear of them no more. Herod heard John gladly, did much good by reason of his influence. What was all that worth? The prophet comes to himself in a dungeon, and wakes to the bitter conviction that his influence had told much in the way of commanding attention, and even winning reverence, but very little in the way of gaining souls; the bitterest, the most crushing discovery in the whole circle of ministerial experience. All this was seeming failure.

And this, brethren, is the picture of almost all human life. To some moods, and under some aspects, it seems, as it seemed to the psalmist, "Man walketh in a vain shadow and disquieteth himself in vain." Go to any church-yard, and stand ten minutes among the grave-stones; read inscription after inscription recording the date of birth, and the date of death, of him who lies below, all the trace which myriads have left behind of their having done their day's work on God's earth —that is failure or—seems so. Cast the eye down the columns of any commander's dispatch after a general action. The men fell by thousands; the officers by hundreds. Courage, high hope, self-devotion, ended in smoke—forgotten by the time of the next list of slain: that is the failure of life once more. Cast your eye over the shelves of a public library—there is the hard toil of years, the product of a life of thought; all that remains of it is there in a worm-eaten folio, taken down once in a century. Failure of human life again. Stand by the most enduring of all human labors, the pyramids of Egypt. One hundred thousand men, year by year, raised those enormous piles to protect the corpses of the buried from rude inspection. The spoiler's hand has been there, and the bodies have been rifled from their mausoleum, and three thousand years have written "failure" upon that. In all that, my Christian brethren, if we look no deeper than the surface, we read the grave of human hope, the apparent nothingness of human labor.

And then look at this history once more. In the isolation of John's dying hour there appears failure again. When a great man dies we listen to hear what he has to say, we turn to the last page of his biography first, to see what he had to bequeath to the world as his experience of life. We expect that the wisdom, which he has been hiving up for years, will distill in honeyed sweetness then. It is generally not so. There is stupor and silence at the last. "How dieth the wise man?" asks Solomon: and he answers bitterly, "As the fool." The martyr of truth dies privately in Herod's dungeon. We have no record of his last words. There were no crowds to look on. We can not describe how he received his sentence. Was he calm? Was he agitated? Did he bless his murderer? Did he give utterance to any deep reflections on human life? All that is shrouded in silence. He bowed his head, and the sharp stroke fell flashing down. We know that, we know no more—apparently a noble life abortive.

And now let us ask the question distinctly, Was all this indeed failure? No, my Christian brethren, it was sublimest victory. John's work was no failure; he left behind him no sect to which he had given his name, but his disciples passed into the service of Christ, and were absorbed in the Christian Church. Words from John had made impressions, and men forgot in after years *where* the impressions first came from, but the day of judgment will not forget. John laid the foundations of a temple, and others built upon it. He laid it in struggle, in martyrdom. It was covered up like the rough masonry below ground, but when we look round on the vast Christian Church we are looking at the superstructure of John's toil.

There is a lesson for us in all that, if we will learn it. Work, true work, done honestly and manfully for Christ, *never* can be a failure. Your own work, my brethren, which God has given you to do, whatever that is, let it be done truly. Leave eternity to show that it has not been in vain in the Lord. Let it but be work, it will tell. True Christian life is like the march of a conquering army into a fortress which has been breached; men fall by hundreds in the ditch. Was their fall a failure? Nay, for their bodies bridge over the hollow, and over them the rest pass on to victory. The quiet religious worship that we have this day --how comes it to be ours? It was purchased for us by the constancy of such men as John, who freely gave their lives. We are treading upon a bridge of martyrs. The suffering was theirs—the victory is ours. John's career was no failure.

Yet we have one more circumstance which *seems* to tell of failure. In John's prison, solitude, misgiving, black doubt, seem for a time to have taken possession of the prophet's soul. All that we know of those feelings is this: John while in confinement sent two of his disciples to Christ, to say to Him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Here is the language of painful uncertainty. We shall not marvel at this if we look steadily at the circumstances. Let us conceive John's feelings. The enthusiastic child of Nature, who had roved in the desert, free as the air he breathed, is now suddenly arrested, and his strong restless heart limited to the four walls of a narrow dungeon. And there he lay startled. An eagle cleaving the air with motionless wing, and in the midst of his career brought from the black cloud by an arrow to the ground, and looking round with his wild, large eye, stunned, and startled there; just such was the free prophet of the wilderness, when Herod's guards had curbed his noble flight, and left him alone in his dungeon.

Now there is apparent failure here, brethren: it is not the thing which we should have expected. We should have expected that a man who had lived so close to God all his life would have no misgivings in his last hours. But, my brethren, it is not so. It is the strange truth that some of the highest of God's servants are tried with darkness on the dying bed. Theory would say, when a religious man is laid up for his last struggles, now he is alone for deep communion with his God. Fact very often says, "No—now he is alone, as his Master was before him, in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Look at John in imagination, and you would say, "Now his rough pilgrimage is done. He is quiet, out of the world, with the rapt foretaste of heaven in his soul." Look at John in fact. He is agitated, sending to Christ, not able to rest, grim doubt wrestling with his soul, misgiving for one last black hour whether all his hope has not been delusion.

There is one thing we remark here by the way. Doubt often comes from inactivity. We can not give the philosophy of it, but this is the fact, Christians who have nothing to do but to sit thinking of themselves, meditating, sentimentalizing, are almost sure to become the prey of dark, black misgivings. John struggling in the desert needs no proof that Jesus is the Christ. John shut up became morbid and doubtful immediately. Brethren, all this is very marvellous. The history of a human soul *is* marvellous. We are mysteries, but here is the practical lesson of it all. For sadness, for suffering, for misgiving, there is no remedy but stirring and doing.

Now look once more at these doubts of John's. All his life long John had been wishing and expecting that the kingdom of God would come. The kingdom of God is right triumphant over wrong, moral evil crushed, goodness set up in its place, the true man recognized, the false man put down and forgotten. All his life long John had panted for that; his hope was to make men better. He tried to make the soldiers merciful, and the publicans honest, and the Pharisees sincere. His complaint was, Why is the world the thing it is? All his life long he had been appealing to the invisible justice of Heaven against the visible brute force which he saw around him. Christ had appeared, and his hopes were straining to the utmost. "Here is the man!" And now, behold, here is no kingdom of heaven at all, but one of darkness still, oppression and cruelty triumphant, Herod putting God's prophet in prison, and the Messiah quietly letting things take their course. Can that be indeed Messiah? All this was exceedingly startling. And it seems that then John began to feel the horrible doubt whether the whole thing were not a mistake, and whether all that which he had taken for inspiration were not, after all, only the excited hopes of an enthusiastic temperament. Brethren, the prophet was well nigh on the brink of failure.

But let us mark—that a man has doubts—*that* is not the evil; all earnest men must expect to be tried with doubts. All men who feel, with their whole souls, the value of the truth which is at stake, can not be satisfied with a "perhaps." Why, when all that is true and excellent in this world, all that is worth living for, is in that question of questions, it is no marvel if we sometimes wish, like Thomas, to see the prints of the nails. to know whether Christ be indeed our Lord or not. Cold hearts are not anxious enough to doubt. Men who love will have their misgivings at times; that is not the evil. But the evil is, when men go on in that languid doubting way, content to doubt, proud of their doubts, morbidly glad to talk about them, liking the romantic gloom of twilight, without the manliness to say—I must and will know the truth. That did not John. Brethren, John appealed to Christ. He did exactly what we do when we pray—and he got his answer. Our Master said to his disciples, Go to my suffering servant, and give him proof. Tell John the things ye see and hear—"The blind see, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached." There is a deep lesson wrapped up in this. We get a firm grasp of truth by prayer. Communion with Christ is the best proof of Christ's existence and Christ's love. It is so even in human life. Misgivings gather darkly round our heart about our friend in his absence; but we seek his frank smile, we feel his affectionate grasp: our suspicions go to sleep again. It is just so in religion. No man is in the habit of praying to God in Christ, and then doubts whether Christ is He "that should come." It is in the power of prayer to realize Christ, to bring Him near, to make you feel His life stirring like a pulse within you. Jacob could not doubt whether he had been with God when his sinew shrunk. John could not doubt whether Jesus was the Christ, when the things He had done were pictured out so vividly in answer to his prayer. Let but a man live with Christ, anxious to have his own life destroyed and Christ's life established in its place, losing himself in Christ, that man will have all his misgivings silenced. These are the two remedies for doubt—activity and prayer. He who works, and *feels* he works—he who prays, and *knows* he prays—has got the secret of transforming life-failure into life-victory.

In conclusion, brethren, we make three remarks which could not be introduced into the body of this subject. The first is: let young and ardent minds, under the first impressions of religion, beware how they pledge themselves by any open profession to more than they can perform. Herod warmly took up religion at first, courted the prophet of religion, and then when the hot fit of enthusiasm had passed away, he found that he had a clog round his life from which he could only disengage himself by a rough, rude effort. Brethren whom God has touched, it is good to count the cost before you begin. If you give up present pursuits *impetuously*, are you sure that present impulses will last? Are you quite certain that a day will not come when you will curse the hour in which you broke altogether with the world? Are you quite sure that the revulsion back again will not be as impetuous as Herod's, and your hatred of the religion which has become a clog as intense as it now is ardent?

Many things doubtless there are to be given up — amusements that are dangerous, society that is questionable. What we give up, let us give up, not from quick feeling but from principle. Enthusiasm is a lovely thing, but let us be calm in what we do. In that solemn, grand thing—Christian life—one step backward is religious death.

Once more: we get from this subject the doctrine of a resurrection. John's life was hardness, his end was agony. That is frequently Christian life. Therefore, says the apostle, if there be no resurrection the Christian's choice is wrong; "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then are we of all men most miserable." Christian life is not visible success—very often it is the apparent opposite of success. It is the resurrection of Christ working itself out *in* us; but it is very often the cross of Christ imprinting itself on us very sharply. The highest prize which God has to give here is martyrdom. The highest style of life is the Baptist's—heroic, enduring, manly love. The noblest coronet which any son of man can wear is a crown of thorns. Christian, *this* is not your rest. Be content to feel that this world is not your home. Homeless upon earth, try more and more to make your home in heaven, above with Christ.

Lastly, we have to learn from this, that devotedness to Christ is our only blessedness. It is surely a strange thing to see the way in which men crowded round the austere prophet, all saying, "Guide us, we can not guide ourselves." Publicans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod, whenever John appears, all bend before him, offering him homage and leadership. How do we account for this? The truth is, the spirit of man groans beneath the weight of its own freedom. When a man has no guide, no master but himself, he is miserable; we want guidance, and if we find a man nobler, wiser than ourselves, it is almost our instinct to prostrate our affections before that man, as the crowds did by Jordan, and say, "Be my example, my guide, my soul's sovereign." That passionate need of worship—hero-worship it has been called—is a primal, universal instinct of the heart. Christ is the answer to it. Men will not do; we try to find men to reverence thoroughly, and we can not do it. We go through life, finding guides, rejecting them one after another, expecting nobleness and finding meanness; and we turn away with a recoil of disappointment.

There is no disappointment in Christ. Christ can be our souls' sovereign. Christ can be our guide. Christ can absorb all the admiration which our hearts long to give. We want to worship men. These Jews wanted to worship man. They were right—man is the rightful object of our worship; but in the roll of ages there has been but one Man whom we can adore without idolatry—the Man Christ Jesus.

SERMONS.

Fourth Series.

I.

THE CHARACTER OF ELI.

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision."—1 Sam. iii. 1.

It is impossible to read this chapter without perceiving that it draws a marked contrast between the two persons of whom it speaks—Eli and Samuel.

1. They are contrasted in point of years: for the one is a boy, the other a gray-headed old man; and if it were for only this, the chapter would be one of deep interest. For it is interesting always to see a friendship between the old and the young. It is striking to see the aged one retaining so much of freshness and simplicity as not to repel the sympathies of boyhood. It is surprising to see the younger one so advanced and thoughtful as not to find dull the society of one who has outlived excitability and passion. This is the picture presented in this chapter. A pair of friends—childhood and old age standing to each other in the relationship, not of teacher and pupil, but of friend and friend.

2. They are contrasted, again, in point of office. Both are judges of Israel. But Eli is a judge rendering up his trust, and closing his public career. Samuel is a judge entering upon his office: and the outgoing ruler, Eli, is placed under very novel and painful circumstances in reference to his successor. He receives God's sentence of doom from the lips of the child he has taught, and the friend he has loved. The venerable judge of forty years is sentenced by the judge elect.

3. Still more striking is the contrast in point of character

A difference of character we expect when ages are so different. But here the difference of inferiority is on the wrong side. It is the young who is counselling, supporting, admonishing the old. It is not the ivy clinging for its own sake to the immovable wall, to be held up: but it is the badly built, mouldering wall held together by the ivy, and only by the ivy kept from falling piecemeal into ruin.

4. Once more we have here the contrast between a judge by office and a judge by Divine call. In the first days of the judges of Israel we find them raised up separately by God, one by one, one for each emergency. So that if war threatened the coasts of Israel, no man knew whence the help would come, or who would be Israel's deliverer. It always did come: there was always one, qualified by God, found ready for the day of need, equal to the need; one whose fitness to be a leader no one had before suspected. But when he did appear, he proved himself to be Israel's acknowledged greatest — greatest by the qualities he displayed, qualities given unto him by God. Therefore men rightly said he was a judge raised up by God. But it seems that in later days judges were appointed by hereditary succession. When danger was always near, men became afraid of trusting to God to raise up a defender for them, and making no preparations for danger of invasion; therefore, in the absence of any special qualification marking out the man, the judge's son became judge at his father's death; or the office devolved on the high-priest. This was Eli's qualification, it would seem. Eli was high-priest, and therefore he was judge. He appears not to have had a single ruling quality. He was only a judge because he was born to the dignity.

There is an earthly wisdom in such an arrangement—nay, such an arrangement is indispensable. It is wise after an earthly sort to have an appointed succession. Hereditary judges, hereditary nobles, hereditary sovereigns: without them, human life would run into inextricable confusion. Nevertheless, such earthly arrangements only *represent* the heavenly order. The Divine order of government is the rule of the wise and good. The earthly arbitrary arrangement—hereditary succession, or any other—stands for this, representing it, more or less fulfills it, but never is it perfectly. And from time to time God sets aside and quashes the arbitrary arrangement, in order to declare that it is only a representation of the true and Divine one. From time to time, one who has qualifications direct from God is made, in Scripture, to stand side by side with one who has his qualifications only from office or earthly appointment; and then the contrast is marvellous indeed. Thus Saul, the king appointed by universal suffrage of the nation, is set aside for David, the man after God's own heart: and thus the Jews, the world's hereditary nobles, descended from the blood and stock of Abraham, are set aside for the true spiritual succession, the Christian Church—inheritors by Divine right, not of Abraham's blood, but of Abraham's faith. Thus the hereditary high-priests in the genuine line of Aaron, priests by lawful succession, representing priestly powers, are set aside at once, so soon as the real High-Priest of God, Jesus Christ, whose priestly powers are real and personal, appears on earth.

And thus by the side of Eli, the judge by office, stands Samuel, the judge by Divine call: qualified by wisdom, insight, will, resting on obedience, to guide and judge God's people Israel. Very instructive are the contrasts of this chapter:—We will consider—

I. Eli's character.
II. Eli's doom.

1. Eli's character has two sides; we will take the bright side first. The first point remarkable in him is the absence of envy. Eli furthers Samuel's advancement, and assists it to his own detriment. Very mortifying was that trial. Eli was the one in Israel to whom, naturally, a revelation should have come. God's priest and God's judge, to whom so fitly as to him could God send a message? But another is preferred: the inspiration comes to Samuel, and Eli is superseded and disgraced. Besides this, every conceivable circumstance of bitterness is added to his humiliation—God's message for all Israel comes to a boy: to one who had been Eli's pupil, to one beneath him, who had performed for him servile offices. This was the bitter cup put into his hand to drink.

And yet Eli *assists* him to attain this dignity. He perceives that God has called the child. He does not say in petulance—"Then, let this favored child find out for himself all he has to do, I will leave him to himself." Eli meekly tells him to go back to his place, instructs him how he is to accept the revelation, and appropriate it: "Go lie down: and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shall say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." He conducts his rival to the presence-chamber, which by himself he can not find, and leaves him there with the King, to be invested with the order which has been stripped off himself.

Consider how difficult this conduct of Eli's was. Remember how difficult it is to be surpassed by a younger brother, and bear it with temper; how hard it is even to be set right, with meekness; to have our faults pointed out to us: especially by persons who, in rank, age, or standing, are our inferiors. Recollect how in our experience of life, in all professions, merit is kept down, shaded by jealousies. Recollect how rare generous enthusiasm is, or even fairness; how men depreciate their rivals by coldness, or by sneering at those whom they dare not openly attack.

It is hard to give information which we have collected with pains, but which we can not use, to another who can make use of it. Consider, again, how much of our English reserve is but another name for jealousy. Men often meet in society with a consciousness of rivalry; and conversation flags because they fear to impart information, lest others should make use of it, and they should thus lose the credit of being original.

One soldier we have heard of who gave up the post of honor and the chance of high distinction to cover an early failure of that great warrior whom England has lately lost, and to give him a fresh chance of retrieving honor. He did what Eli did: assisted his rival to rise above him. But where is the man of trade who will throw in a rival's way the custom which he can not use himself? Where is the professional man, secular or clerical, who will so speak of another of the same profession, while struggling with him in honorable rivalry, or so assist him, as to insure that the brightest lustre shall shine upon what he really is? Whoever will ponder these things will feel that Eli's was no common act.

Now, for almost all of us, there are one or two persons in life who cross our path, whose rise will be our eclipse, whose success will abridge ours, whose fair career will thwart ours, darken our prospects, cross our affections. Those one or two form our trial; they are the test and proof of our justice. How we feel and act to them proves whether we are just or not. It was easy for Eli to have instructed any one else how to approach God. But the difficulty was how to instruct Samuel. Samuel alone, in all Israel, crossed his path. And yet Eli stood the test. He was unswervingly just. He threw no petty hindrances in his way. He removed all. He gave a clear, fair, honorable field. That act of Eli's is fair and beautiful to gaze upon.

2. Remark the absence of all priestly pretensions.

Eli might with ease have assumed the priestly tone. When Samuel came with his strange story, that he had heard a voice calling to him in the dark, Eli might have fixed upon him a clear, cold, unsympathizing eye, and said, "This is excitement—mere enthusiasm. I am the appointed channel of God's communications; I am the priest. Hear the Church. Unordained, unanointed with priestly oil, a boy, a child, it is presumption for you to pretend to communications from Jehovah! A layman has no right to hear Voices; it is fanaticism." Eli might have done this; he would have only done what ordained men have done a thousand times when they have frowned irregular enthusiasm into dissent. And then Samuel would have become a mystic, or a self-relying enthusiast. For he could not have been made to think that the Voice was a delusion. *That* Voice no priest's frown could prevent his hearing. On the other hand, Eli might have given his own authoritative interpretation to Samuel of that word of God which he had heard. But suppose that interpretation had been wrong?

Eli did neither of these things. He sent Samuel to God. He taught him to inquire for himself. He did not tell him to reject as fanaticism the belief that an inner Voice was speaking to him, a boy; nor did he try to force his own interpretation on that Voice. His great care was to put Samuel in direct communication with God; to make him listen to God; nay, and that independently of him, Eli. Not to rule him; not to *direct* his feelings and belief; not to keep him in the leading-strings of spiritual childhood, but to teach him to walk alone.

There are two sorts of men who exercise influence. The first are those who perpetuate their own opinions, bequeath their own names, form a sect, gather a party round them who speak their words, believe their belief. Such men were the ancient rabbis. And of such men, in and out of the Church, we have abundance now. It is the influence most aimed at and most loved. The second class is composed of those who stir up faith, conscience, thought, to do their own work. They are not anxious that those they teach should think as they do, but that they should *think*. Nor that they should take this or that rule of right and wrong, but that they should be conscientious. Nor that they should adopt their own views of God, but that faith in God should be roused in earnest. Such men propagate not many *views;* but they propagate life itself in inquiring minds and earnest hearts.

Now this is God's real, best work. Men do not think so. They like to be guided. They ask, What am I to think? and what am I to believe? and what am I to feel? Make it easy for me. Save me the trouble of reflecting and the anguish of inquiring. It is very easy to do this for them; but from what minds, and from what books, do we really gain most of that which we can really call our own? From those that are suggestive, from those that can kindle life within us, and set us thinking, and call conscience into action—not from those that exhaust a subject and seem to leave it threadbare, but from those that make us feel there is a vast deal more in that subject yet, and send us, as Eli sent Samuel, into the dark Infinite to listen for ourselves.

And this is the ministry and its work—not to drill hearts, and minds, and consciences, into right forms of thought and mental postures, but to guide to the Living God who speaks. It is a thankless work; for, as I have said, men love to have all their religion done out for them. They want something definite, and sharp, and clear—words—not the life of God in the soul: and indeed, it is far more flattering to our vanity to have men take our views, represent us, be led by us. Rule is dear to all. To rule men's spirits is the dearest rule of all; but it is the work of every *true* priest of God to lead men to think and feel for themselves—to open their ears that God may speak. Eli did this part of his work in a true spirit. He guided Samuel, trained his character. But "God's Spirit!" Eli says, "I can not give that. God's voice! I am not God's voice. I am only God's witness, erring, listening for myself. I am here, God's witness, to say—God speaks. I may err—let God be true. Let me be a liar, if you will. My mission is done when your ear is opened for God to whisper into." Very true, Eli was superseded. Very true, his work was done. A new set of views, not his, respecting Israel's policy and national life, were to be propagated by his successor; but it was Eli that had guided that successor to God who gave the views: and Eli had not lived in vain.

My brethren, if any man or any body of men stand between us and the living God, saying, "Only through us—the Church—can you approach God; only through my consecrated touch can you receive grace; only through my ordained teaching can you hear God's voice; and the voice which speaks in your soul in the still moments of existence is no revelation from God, but a delusion and a fanaticism"—that man is a false priest. To bring the soul face to face with God, and supersede ourselves, that is the work of the Christian ministry.

3. There was in Eli a resolve to know the whole truth. "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that

He said unto thee." Eli asked in earnest to know the worst.

It would be a blessed thing to know what God thinks of us. But next best to this would be to see ourselves in the light in which we appear to others: other men's opinion is a mirror in which we learn to see ourselves. It keeps us humble when bad and good alike are known to us. The worst slander has in it some truth from which we may learn a lesson, which may make us wiser when the first smart is passed.

Therefore it is a blessing to have a friend like Samuel, who can dare to tell us truth, judicious, candid, wise; one to whom we can say, "Now tell me what I am, and what I seem; hide nothing, but tell me the worst." But observe, we are not to beg praise or invite censure—that were weak. We are not to ask for every malicious criticism or tormenting report—that were hypochondria, ever suspecting, and ever self-tormenting; and to that diseased sensibility it would be no man's duty to minister. True friendship will not retail tormenting trifles; but what we want is one friend at least, who will extenuate nothing, but with discretion tell the worst, using unflinchingly the sharp knife which is to cut away the fault.

4. There was pious acquiescence in the declared will of God. When Samuel had told him every whit, Eli replied, "It is the Lord." The highest religion could say no more. What more can there be than surrender to the will of God? In that one brave sentence you forget all Eli's vacillation. Free from envy, free from priestcraft, earnest, humbly submissive—that is the bright side of Eli's character, and the side least known or thought of.

There is another side to Eli's character. He was a wavering, feeble, powerless man, with excellent intentions, but an utter want of will; and if we look at it deeply, it is *will* that makes the difference between man and man; not knowledge, not opinions, not devoutness, not feeling, but will—the power to be. Let us look at the causes of this feebleness.

There are apparently two. 1. A recluse life—he lived in the temple. Praying and sacrificing, perhaps, were the substance of his life; all that unfitted him for the world; he knew nothing of life; he knew nothing of character. When Hannah came before him in an agony of prayer, he misjudged her. He mistook the tremulousness of her lip for the trembling of intoxication. He could not rule his own household; he could not rule the Church of God—a shy, solitary, amiable ecclesiastic and recluse—that was Eli.

And such are the really fatal men in the work of life, those who look out on human life from a cloister, or who know nothing of men except through books. Religious persons dread worldliness. They will not mix in politics. They keep aloof from life. Doubtless there is a danger in knowing too much of the world. But, beyond all comparison, of the two extremes the worst is knowing too little of life. A priesthood severed from human sympathies, separated from men, cut off from human affections, and then meddling fatally with questions of human life—that is the Romish priesthood. And just as fatal, when they come to meddle with public questions, is the interference of men as good as Eli, as devout and as incompetent, who have spent existence in a narrow religious party which they mistake for the world.

2. That feebleness arose out of original temperament. Eli's feelings were all good: his acts were all wrong. In sentiment Eli might be always trusted: in action he was forever false, because he was a weak, vacillating man.

Therefore his virtues were all of a negative character. He was forgiving to his sons, because unable to feel strongly the viciousness of sin; free from jealousy, because he had no keen affections; submissive, because too indolent to feel rebellious. Before we praise a man for his excellences, we must be quite sure that they do not rise out of so many defects. No thanks to a proud man that he is not vain. No credit to a man without love that he is not jealous: he has not strength enough for passion.

All history overrates such men. Men like Eli ruin families by instability, produce revolutions, die well when only passive courage is wanted, and are reckoned martyrs. They live like children, and die like heroes. Deeply true to nature, brethren, and exceedingly instructive, is this history of Eli. It is quite natural that such men should suffer well. For if only their minds are made up for them by inevitable circumstances, they can submit. When people come to Eli and say, "You should reprove your sons," he can do it after a fashion; when it is said to him, "You must die," he can make up his mind to die: but this is not *taking* up the cross. Let us look at the result of such a character.

1. It had no influence. Eli was despised by his own sons. He was not respected by the nation. One only of all he lived with, kept cleaving to him till the last—Samuel; but that was in a kind of mournful pity. The secret of influence is will—not goodness, not badness—both bad and good may have it; but will. And you can not counterfeit will if you have it not. Men speak strongly and vehemently when

most conscious of their own vacillation. They commit themselves to hasty resolutions, but the resolve is not kept; and so, with strong feelings and good feelings, they lose influence day by day.

2. It manifested incorrigibility. Eli was twice warned; once by a prophet, once by Samuel. Both times he answered submissively. He used strong, nay, passionate expressions of penitence. Both times you would have thought an entire reformation and change of life was at hand. Both times he was warned in vain.

There are persons who go through life sinning and sorrowing—sorrowing and sinning. No experience teaches them. Torrents of tears flow from their eyes. They are full of eloquent regrets. You can not find it in your heart to condemn them, for their sorrow is so graceful and touching, so full of penitence and self-condemnation. But tears, heart-breaks, repentance, warnings, are all in vain. Where they did wrong once, they do wrong again. What are such persons to do in the next life? Where will the Elis of this world be? God only knows. But Christ has said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

3. It resulted in misery to others.

Recollect what this weakness caused. Those young men, Eli's sons, grew up to be their country's plague. They sapped the moral standard of their countrymen and countrywomen. They degraded the ministry. "Men abhorred the offering of the Lord." The armies of Israel, without faith in God, and without leadership of man, fled before the enemy. All that was Eli's doing. A weak man with good feelings makes more misery than a determined bad man. Under a tyranny men are at least at rest, for they know the worst. But when subjects or children know that by entreaty, or persistence, or intimidation, they can obtain what they want, then a family or a nation is cursed with restlessness. Better to live under bad laws which are firmly administered, than under good ones where there is a misgiving whether they may not be changed. There is no wretchedness like the wretchedness caused by an undetermined will to those who serve under it.

II.

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST KING IN ISRAEL.

"And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you."—1 Sam. xii. 1.

Our subject to-day is the selection of the first king of Israel.

We have arrived at that crisis in Israel's history when the first shock occurred in her national life. That shock was bereft of part of its violence by the wisdom of a single man. By the lustre of his personal character, by his institutions, and by his timely concessions, Samuel won that highest of all privileges which can be given to a mortal—the power of saving his country. He did not achieve the best conceivable; but he secured the best possible. The conceivable best was, that there should have been no shock at all, that Israel's elders should have calmly insisted on a reformation of abuses: that they should have come to Samuel, and demanded reparation for the insulted majesty of Hebrew law in the persons of the young judges, his sons, who had dared to dishonor it. This would have been the first best. The second best was the best practicable—that the shock should be made as light as possible; that Samuel should still control the destinies of his country, select the new king, and modify the turbulence of excess. So that Israel was in the position of a boat which has been borne down a swift stream into the very suction of the rapids. The best would be that she should be put back; but if it be too late for this, then the best is that there should be in her a strong arm and a steady eye to keep her head straight. And thus it was with Israel. She plunged down the fall madly, rashly, wickedly; but, under Samuel's control, steadily. This part of the chapter we arrange in two branches:—

I. Samuel's conduct after the mortification of his own rejection.

II. The selection of the first monarch of Israel.

I. The tenth chapter broke off in a moment of suspense. The people, having accepted Saul as their king, had been dis missed, and Samuel was left alone; but his feelings were very different from those which he had in that other moment of solitude, when he had dismissed the delegates of the people. That struggle was past. He was now calm. The first moment was a terrible one. It was one of those periods in human life when the whole meaning of life is perplexed, its aims and hopes frustrated; when a man is down upon his face and gust after gust sweeps desolately over his spirit. Samuel was there to feel all the ideas that naturally suggest themselves in such hours—the instability of human affection—the nothingness of the highest earthly aims. But by degrees two thoughts calmed him. The first was the feeling of identification with God's cause. "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me." Had it been mere wounded pride, or pique, or family aggrandizement arrested, or ambition disappointed, it would have been a cureless sorrow. But Samuel had God's cause at heart, and this gave a loftier character to his sadness. There was no envenomed feeling, no resentment, no smarting scornfulness. To be part of a great Divine cause which has failed, is an elevating as well as a saddening sensation. A conviction mingles with it that the cause of God will one day be the conquering side.

The other element of consolation was the Divine sympathy. If they had been rebellious to their ruler, they had also been disloyal to Jehovah. An unruly subject has had a poor school in which to learn reverence for things heavenly. Atheism and revolution here, as elsewhere, went hand-in-hand. We do not know how this sentence was impressed by the Infinite Mind on Samuel's mind; all we know is, he had a conviction that God was a fellow-sufferer. This, however, was inferior, in point of clearness, to *our* knowledge of the Divine sympathy: Jehovah, the unnameable and awful, was a very different conception from "God manifested in the flesh." To the Jew, His dwelling was the peak round which the cloud had wreathed its solemn form, and the thunders spent themselves; but the glory of the life of Jesus to us is, that it is full of the human. The many-colored phases of human feeling all find themselves reflected in the lights and shadows of ever-varying sensitiveness which the different sentences of His conversation exhibit. Be your tone of feeling what it may, whether you are poor or rich, gay or sad—in society or alone—adored, loved, betrayed, misunderstood, despised—weigh well His words first, by thinking what they mean, and you will become aware that one heart in space throbs in conscious harmony with yours. In its degree, that was Samuel's support.

Next, Samuel's cheerful way of submitting to his fate is to be observed. Another prophet, when his prediction was nullified, built himself a booth and sat beneath it, fretting in sullen pride, to see the end of Nineveh. Samuel might have done this; he might have withdrawn himself in offended dignity from public life, watched the impotent attempts of the people to guide themselves, and seen dynasty after dynasty fall with secret pleasure. Very different is his conduct. He addresses himself like a man to the exigencies of the moment. His great scheme is frustrated. Well, he will not despair of God's cause yet. Bad as things are, he will try to make the best of them.

Now remark in all this the healthy, vigorous tone of Samuel's religion. This man, the greatest and wisest then alive, thought this the great thing to live for—to establish a kingdom of God on earth—to transform his own country into a kingdom of God. It is worth while to see how he set about it. From first to last, it was in a practical, real way—by activity in every department of life. We recollect his early childhood; his duty then was to open the gates of the temple of the Lord, and he did that regularly, with scrupulous fidelity, in the midst of very exciting scenes. He was turning that narrow circumscribed sphere of his into a kingdom of God. Afterwards he became ruler. His spirituality then consisted in establishing courts of justice, founding academies, looking into every thing himself. Now he is deposed: but he has duties still. He has a king to look for, public festivals to superintend, a public feast to preside over; and later on we shall find him becoming the teacher of a school. All this was a religion for life. His spirituality was no fanciful, shadowy thing; the kingdom of God to him was to be in this world, and we know no surer sign of enfeebled religion than the disposition to separate religion from life and life-duties.

Listen: what is secularity or worldliness? Meddling with worldly things? or meddling with a worldly spirit? We brand political existence and thought with the name "worldly"—we stigmatize first one department of life and then another as secular; and so religion becomes a pale, unreal thing, which must end, if we are only true to our principles, in the cloister. Spirituality becomes the exclusive property of a few amiable mystics; men of thought and men of action draw off; religion becomes feeble, and the world, deserted and proscribed, becomes infidel.

II. Samuel's treatment of his successor, after his own rejection, is remarkable. It was characterized by two things—courtesy and generosity. When he saw the man who was to be his successor, he invited him to the entertainment; he gave him precedence, bidding him go up before him; placed him as a stranger at the post of honor, and set before him the choice portion. This is politeness; what we allude to is a very different thing, however, from that mere system of etiquette and conventionalisms in which small minds find their very being, to observe which accurately is life, and to transgress which is a sin.

Courtesy is not confined to the high-bred; often theirs is but the artistic imitation of courtesy. The peasant who rises to put before you his only chair, while he sits upon the oaken chest, is a polite man. Motive determines every thing. If we are courteous merely to substantiate our claims to mix in good society, or exhibit good manners chiefly to show that we have been in it, this is a thing indeed to smile at; contemptible, if it were not rather pitiable. But that politeness which springs spontaneously from the heart, the desire to put others at their ease, to save the stranger from a sensation of awkwardness, to soothe the feeling of inferiority—that, ennobled as it is by love, mounts to the high character of a heavenly grace.

Something still more beautiful marks Samuel's generosity. The man who stood before him was a successful rival. One who had been his inferior now was to supersede him. And Samuel lends him a helping hand—gracefully assists him to rise above him, entertains him, recommends him to the people. It is very touching.

Curiously enough, Samuel had twice in life to do a similar thing. Once he had to depose Eli, by telling him God's doom. Now he has to depose himself. The first he shrank from, and only did it at last when urged. That was delicate. On the present occasion, with a large and liberal fullness of heart, he elevates Saul above himself. And that we call the true, high Gospel spirit. Samuel and the people did the same thing—they made Saul king. But the people did it by drawing down Samuel nearer to themselves. Samuel did it by elevating Saul above himself. One was the spirit of revolution, the other was the spirit of the Gospel.

In our own day it specially behooves us to try the spirits, whether they be of God. The reality and the counterfeit, as in this case, are singularly like each other. Three spirits make their voices heard in a cry for freedom, for brotherhood, for human equality. And we must not forget, these are names hallowed by the very Gospel itself. They are inscribed on its forehead. Unless we realize them, we have no Gospel kingdom. Distinguish, however, well, the reality from the baser alloy. The spirit which longs for freedom puts forth a righteous claim; for it is written, "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." Brotherhood—the Gospel promises brotherhood also—"One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Equality—yes. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." This is the grand federation, brotherhood, emancipation of the human race.

Now, the world's spirit aims at bringing all this about by drawing others down to the level on which each one stands. The Christian spirit secures equality by raising up. The man that is less wise, less good than I—I am to raise up to my level in these things. Yes, and in social position, too, if he be fit for it. I am to be glad to see him rise above me, as generously as Samuel saw Saul. And those that are above me, better than I, wiser than I, I have a right to expect to elevate me, if they can, to be as wise and good as themselves. This is the only levelling the Gospel knows. What was the mission of the Redeemer but this? To raise the lower to the higher, to make men partakers of the Divine nature—His nature, standing on His ground; to descend to the roots of society, reclaiming the outcasts, elevating the degraded, ennobling the low, and reminding, in the thunder of reiterated "woes," those who had left their inferiors in the dark, and those who stood aloof in the titled superiority of rabbi—of the account to be rendered by them yet.

And if we could but all work in this generous rivalry, our rent and bleeding country, sick at heart, gangrened with an exclusiveness which narrows our sympathies and corrupts our hearts, might be all that the most patriotic love would have her. Brethren in Christ, I earnestly urge again the lesson of last Sunday. Not by pulling down those that are above us, not by the still more un-Christlike plan of keeping down those that are beneath us, can we make this country of ours a kingdom of Christ. If we can not practise nor bear to have impressed upon us, more condescension, more tenderness, and the duty of unlearning much, very much of that galling, insulting spirit of demarkation with which we sever ourselves from the sympathies of the class immediately beneath us, those tears may have to flow again which were shed over the city which would not know the day of her visitation: lulled into an insane security even at the moment when the judgment-eagles were gathered together and plunging for their prey.

Once more: there is suggested to us the thought that Samuel was now growing old. It seems by the eleventh and thirteenth chapters, in connection with the text, that the cause which hastened the demand of the elders for a king was the danger of invasion. The Ammonites and Philistines were sharpening their swords for war. And men felt that Samuel was too old for such a crisis. Only a few Sundays ago we were considering Samuel's childhood, his weaning, education, and call. Now he is old: his hair is gray, and men beginning to feel that he is no longer what he was. A high, great life; and a few chapters sum it all up. And such is all life.

To-day we baptize a child; in a period of time startlingly short, the minister is called upon to prepare the young man for confirmation. A little interval and the chimes are ringing a merry wedding-peal. One more pause, and the winds are blowing their waves of shadow over the long grass that grows rankly on his grave. The font, the altar, and the sepulchre, and but a single step between. Now we do not dwell on this. It is familiar—a tale that is told.

But what we mention this for is, to observe that though Samuel's life was fast going, Samuel's work was permanent. Evidence of this lies in the chapter before us. When Saul came to the city and inquired for the seer's house, some young maidens, on their way to draw water, replied; and their reply contained an accurate account, even to details, of the religious service which was about to take place. The judge had arrived; there was to be a sacrifice, the people would not eat till he came, he would pronounce a blessing, after that there would be a select feast. Now compare the state of things in Israel when Samuel became judge. Had a man come to a city in Israel then, there would have been no sacrifice going on, or if there had, no one would have been found so accurately familiar with the whole service; for then "men abhorred the offering of the Lord." But now the first chance passer-by could run through it all, as a thing habitual—as a Church of England worshipper would tell you the hours of service, and the order of its performance. So that they might forget Samuel—they might crowd round his successor—but Samuel's work could not be forgotten: years after he was quiet and silent under ground, his courts in Bethel and Mizpeh would form the precedents and the germs of the national jurisprudence.

A very pregnant lesson. Life passes, work is permanent. It is all going—fleeting and withering. Youth goes. Mind decays. That which is done remains. Through ages, through eternity, what you have done for God, that, and only that, you are. Ye that are workers, and count it the soul's worst disgrace to feel life passing in idleness and uselessness, take courage. Deeds never die.

III.

PRAYER.

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Matt. xxvi. 39.

No one will refuse to identify holiness with prayer. To say that a man is religious is to say the same thing as to say he prays. For what is prayer? To connect every thought with the thought of God. To look on every thing as His work and His appointment. To submit every thought, wish, and resolve to Him. To feel His presence, so that it shall restrain us even in our wildest joy. That is prayer. And what we are now, surely we are by prayer. If we have attained any measure of goodness, if we have resisted temptations, if we have any self-command, or if we live with aspirations and desires beyond the common, we shall not hesitate to ascribe all to prayer.

There is therefore no question among Christians about the efficacy of prayer; but that granted generally, then questionings and diversities of view begin. What is prayer? What is the efficacy of prayer? Is prayer necessarily words in form and sequence; or is there a real prayer that never can be syllabled? Does prayer change the outward universe, or does it alter our inward being? Does it work on God, or does it work on us?

To all these questions, I believe a full and sufficient answer is returned in the text. Let us examine it calmly, and without prejudice or prepossession. If we do, it can not be but that we shall obtain a conclusion in which we may rest with peace, be it what it eventually may. We will consider—

I. The right of petition.
II. Erroneous views of what prayer is.
III. The true efficacy of prayer.

I. The right of petition. "Let this cup pass from me." We infer it to be a *right*—1. Because it is a necessity of our human nature.

The Son of Man feels the hour at hand: shrinks from it, seeks solitude, flies from human society—feels the need of it again, and goes back to his disciples. Here is that need of sympathy which forces us to feel for congenial thought among relations; and here is that recoil from cold unsympathizing natures, which forces us back to our loneliness again. In such an hour, they who have before forgotten prayer betake themselves to God: and in such an hour, even the most resigned are not without the wish, "Let this cup pass." Christ Himself has a separate wish—one human wish.

Prayer, then, is a necessity of our humanity, rather than a duty. To force it as a duty is dangerous. Christ did not; never commanded it, never taught it till asked. This necessity is twofold. First, the necessity of sympathy. We touch other human spirits only at a point or two. In the deepest departments of thought and feeling we are alone; and the desire to escape that loneliness finds for itself a voice in prayer.

Next, the necessity of escaping the sense of a crushing fate. The feeling that all things are fixed and unalterable, that we are surrounded by necessities which we can not break through, is intolerable whenever it is realized. Our egotism cries against it; our innocent egotism, and the practical reconciliation* between our innocent egotism and hideous fatalism is prayer, which realizes a living Person ruling all things with a will.

2. Again, we base this right on our privilege as children. "My Father"—that sonship Christ shares with us reveals the human race as a family in which God is a Father, and Himself the elder brother. It would be a strange family, where the child's will dictates; but it would be also strange where a child may not, as a child, express its foolish wish, if it be only to have the impossibility of gratifying it explained.

3. Christ used it as a right, therefore we may.

There is many a case in life, where to act seems useless—many a truth which at times appears incredible. Then we throw ourselves on Him—He did it, He believed it, that is enough. He was wise, where I am foolish. He was holy, where I am evil. He must know. He must be right. I rely on Him. Bring what arguments you may: say that prayer can not change God's will. I know it. Say that prayer ten thousand times comes back like a stone. Yes, but Christ prayed, therefore I may and I will pray. Not only so, but I *must* pray; the wish felt and not uttered before God, is a prayer. Speak, if your heart prompts, in articulate words, but there is an unsyllabled wish, which is also prayer. You can not help praying, if God's Spirit is in yours.

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* Mesothesis.

Do not say, I must wait till this tumult has subsided and I am calm. The worst storm of spirit is the time for prayer: the Agony was the hour of petition. Do not stop to calculate improbabilities. Prayer is truest when there is most of instinct and least of reason. Say, "My Father, thus I fear and thus I wish. Hear thy foolish, erring child—let this cup pass from me."

II. Erroneous notions of what prayer is. They are contained in that conception which He negatived, "As I will."

A common popular conception of prayer is, that it is the means by which the wish of man determines the will of God. This conception finds an exact parallel in those anecdotes with which Oriental history abounds, wherein a sovereign gives to his favorite some token, on the presentation of which every request must be granted. As when Ahasuerus promised Queen Esther that her petition should be granted, even to the half of his kingdom. As when Herod swore to Herodias's daughter that he would do whatever she should require. It will scarcely be said that this is a misrepresentation of a very common doctrine, for they who hold it would state it thus, and would consider the mercifulness and privilege of prayer to consist in this, that by faith we can obtain all that we want.

Now, in the text it is said distinctly this is not the aim of prayer, nor its meaning. "*Not* as I will." The wish of man does not determine the will of God.

Try this conception by four tests.

1. By its incompatibility with the fact that this universe is a system of laws. Things are thus, rather than thus. Such an event is invariably followed by such a consequence. This we call a law. All is one vast chain, from which if you strike a single link, you break the whole. It has been truly said that to heave a pebble on the sea-shore one yard higher up would change all antecedents from the creation, and all consequents to the end of time. For it would have required a greater force in the wave that threw it there—and that would have required a different degree of strength in the storm—that again, a change of temperature all over the globe—and that again, a corresponding difference in the temperaments and characters of the men inhabiting the different countries.

So that when a child wishes a fine day for his morrow's excursion, and hopes to have it by an alteration of what would have been without his wish, he desires nothing less than a whole new universe.

It is difficult to state this in all its force except to men who are professionally concerned with the daily observation of the uniformity of the Divine laws. But when the astronomer descends from his serene gaze upon the moving heavens, and the chemist rises from contemplating those marvellous affinities, the proportions of which are never altered, realizing the fact that every atom and element has its own mystic number in the universe to the end of time; or when the economist has studied the laws of wealth, and seen how fixed they are and sure: then to hear that it is expected that, to comply with a mortal's convenience or plans, God shall place this whole harmonious system at the disposal of selfish humanity, seems little else than impiety against the Lord of law and order.

2. Try it next by fact.

Ask those of spiritual experience. We do not ask whether prayer has been efficacious—of course it has. It is God's ordinance. Without prayer the soul dies. But what we ask is, whether the good derived has been exactly this, that prayer brought them the very thing they wished for? For instance, did the plague come and go according to the laws of prayer or according to the laws of health? Did it come because men neglected prayer, or because they disobeyed those rules which His wisdom has revealed as the conditions of salubrity? And when it departed, was it because a nation lay prostrate in sackcloth and ashes, or because it arose and girded up its loins and removed those causes and those obstructions which, by everlasting law, are causes and obstructions? Did the catarrh or the consumption go from him who prayed, sooner than from him who humbly bore it in silence? Try it by the case of Christ—Christ's prayer did not succeed. He prayed that the cup might pass from Him. It did not so pass.

Now lay down the irrefragable principle, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." What Christ's prayer was not efficacious to do, that ours is not certain to effect. If the object of petition be to obtain, then Christ's prayer failed; if the refusal of His petition did not show the absence of the favor of His Father, then neither does the refusal of ours.

Nor can you meet this by saying, "His prayer could not succeed, because it was decreed that Christ should die; but ours may, because nothing hangs on our fate, and we know of no decree that is against our wish."

Do you mean that some things are decreed and some are left to chance? That would make a strange, disconnected universe. The death of a worm, your death, its hour and moment, are all fixed, as much as His was. Fortuity, chance, contingency, are only words which express our ignorance of causes.

3. Try it by the prejudicial results of such a belief.

To think that prayer changes God's will gives unworthy ideas of God. It supposes our will to be better than His, the Unchangeable, the Unsearchable, the All-wise. Can you see the All of things—the consequences and secret connections of the event you wish? and if not, would you really desire the terrible power of infallibly securing it?

Consider, also, the danger of vanity and supineness resulting from the fulfillment of our desires as a necessity. Who does not recollect such cases in childhood, when some curious coincidences with our wishes were taken for direct replies to prayer, and made us fancy ourselves favorites of Heaven, in possession of a secret spell. These coincidences did not make us more earnest, more holy, but rather the reverse. Careless and vain, we fancied we had a power which superseded exertion, we looked down contemptuously on others. Those were startling and wholesome lessons which came when our prayer failed, and threw our whole childish theory into confusion. It is recorded that a favorite once received from his sovereign a ring as a mark of her regard, with a promise that whenever he presented that ring to her she would grant his request. He entered on rebellion, from a vain confidence in the favor of his sovereign. The ring which he sent was kept back by his messenger, and he was executed. So would we rebel if prayer were efficacious to change God's will and to secure His pardon.

4. It would be most dangerous, too, as a criterion of our spiritual state. If we think that answered prayer is a proof of grace, we shall be unreasonably depressed and unreasonably elated—depressed when we do not get what we wish, elated when we do; besides, we shall judge uncharitably of other men.

Two farmers pray, the one whose farm is on light land, for rain; the other, whose contiguous farm is on heavy soil, for fine weather; plainly one or the other must come, and that which is good for one may be injurious to the other. If this be the right view of prayer, then the one who does not obtain his wish must mourn, doubting God's favor, or believing that he did not pray in faith. Two Christian armies meet for battle—Christian men on both sides pray for success to their own arms. Now if victory be given to prayer, independent of other considerations, we are driven to the pernicious principle, that success is the test of right.

From all which the history of this prayer of Christ delivers us. It is a precious lesson of the cross, that apparent failure is eternal victory. It is a precious lesson of this prayer, that the object of prayer is not the success of its petition; nor is its rejection a proof of failure. Christ's petition was not gratified, yet He was the One well-beloved of His Father.

III. The true efficacy of prayer—"As Thou wilt."

All prayer is to change the will human into submission to the will Divine. Trace the steps in this history by which the mind of the Son of Man arrived at this result. First, we find the human wish almost unmodified, that "that cup might pass from Him." Then He goes to the disciples, and it would appear that the sight of those disciples, cold, unsympathetic, asleep, chilled His spirit, and set that train of thought in motion which suggested the idea that perhaps the passing of that cup was not His Father's will. At all events, He goes back with this perhaps—"*If* this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Thy will be done." He goes back again, and the words become more strong: "Nevtheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." The last time He comes, all hesitancy is gone. Not one trace of the human wish remains; strong in submission, He goes to meet His doom—"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." This, then, is the true course and history of prayer. Hence we conclude—

1. That prayer which does not succeed in moderating our wish, in changing the passionate desire into still submission, the anxious, tumultuous expectation into silent surrender, is no true prayer, and proves that we have not the spirit of true prayer.

Hence, too, we learn—

2. That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God: that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving. In the prayer taught by Christ there is only one petition for personal good, and that a singularly simple and modest one, "Give us this day our daily bread," and even that expresses dependence far rather than anxiety or desire.

From this we understand the spirit of that retirement for prayer into lonely tops of mountains and deep shades of night, of which we read so often in His life. It was not so much to secure any definite event as from the need of holy communion with His Father—prayer without any definite wish; for we must distinguish two things which are often confounded. Prayer for specific blessings is a very different thing from communion with God. Prayer is one thing, petition is quite another. Indeed, hints are given us which make it seem that a time will come when spirituality shall be so complete, and acquiescence in the will of God so entire, that petition shall be superseded. "In that day ye shall ask me nothing;" "Again I say not I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." And to the same purpose are all those passages in which He discountenances the heathen idea of prayer, which consists in urging, prevailing upon God. "They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him."

Practically then, I say, Pray as He did, till prayer makes you cease to pray. Pray till prayer makes you forget your own wish, and leave it or merge it in God's will. The Divine wisdom has given us prayer, not as a means whereby to obtain the good things of earth, but as a means whereby we learn to do without them; not as a means whereby we escape evil, but as a means whereby we become strong to meet it. "There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." That was the true reply to His prayer.

And so, in the expectation of impending danger, our prayer has won the victory, not when we have warded off the trial, but when, like Him, we have learned to say, "Arise, let us go to meet the evil."

Now, contrast the moral consequences of this view of prayer with those which, as we saw, arise from the other view. Hence comes that mistrust of our own understanding which will not suffer us to dictate to God. Hence, that benevolence which, contemplating the good of the whole rather than self-interest, dreads to secure what is pleasing to self at the possible expense of the general weal. Hence, that humility which looks on ourselves as atoms, links in a mysterious chain, and shrinks from the dangerous wish to break the chain. Hence, lastly, the certainty that the All-wise is the All-good, and that "all things work together for good," for the individual as well as for the whole. Then, the selfish cry of egotism being silenced, we obtain Job's sublime spirit.

"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

There is one objection may be made to this. It may be said, If this be prayer, I have lost all I prized. It is sad and depressing to think that prayer will alter nothing, and bring nothing that I wish. All that was precious in prayer is struck away from me.

But one word in reply. You have lost the certainty of getting your own wish; you have got instead the compensation of knowing that the best possible, best for you, best for all, will be accomplished. Is that nothing? and will you dare to say that prayer is no boon at all unless you can reverse the spirit of your Master's prayer, and say, "Not as *Thou* wilt, but as *I* will?"

IV.

PERVERSION, AS SHOWN IN BALAAM'S CHARACTER.

"And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak."—Num. xxii. 34, 35.

The judgment which we form on the character of Balaam is one of unmitigated condemnation. We know and say that he was a false prophet and a bad man. This is however, doubtless, because we come to the consideration of his history having already prejudged his case.

St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. John have passed sentence upon him. "Having eyes full of adultery, and that can not cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet;" "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core;" "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." And so we read the history of Balaam familiar with these passages, and coloring all with them.

But assuredly this is not the sentence we should have pronounced if we had been left to ourselves, but one much less severe. Repulsive as Balaam's character is when it is seen at a distance, when it is seen near it has much in it that is human, like ourselves, inviting compassion—even admiration: there are traits of firmness, conscientiousness, nobleness.

For example, in the text, he offers to retrace his steps as soon as he perceives that he is doing wrong. He asks guidance of God before he will undertake a journey: "And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." He professes—and in earnest—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." He prays to "die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his." Yet the inspired judgment of his character, as a whole, stands recorded as one of unmeasured severity.

And accordingly one of the main lessons in Balaam's history must ever be, to trace how it is that men, who to the world appear respectable, conscientious, honorable, gifted, religious, may be in the sight of God accursed, and heirs of perdition. Our subject, then, to-day is perversion:

I. Perversion of great gifts.
II. Perversion of the conscience.

I. Of great gifts.

The history tells of Balak sending to Pethor for Balaam to curse the Israelites. This was a common occurrence in ancient history. There was a class of men regularly set apart to bless and curse, to spell-bind the winds and foretell events. Balaam was such an one.

Now the ordinary account would be that such men were impostors, or endued with political sagacity, or had secret dealings with the devil. But the Bible says Balaam's inspiration was from God.

It did not arise from diabolical agency, or from merely political sagacity: that magnificent ode of sublime poetry, given in chapter xxiv., is from God.

The Bible refers the inspiration of the poet, of the prophet, of the worker in cunning workmanship, to God. It makes no mention of our modern distinction between that inspiration enjoyed by the sacred writers and that enjoyed by ordinary men, except so far as the use is concerned. God's prophets glorified Him. The wicked prophets glorified themselves; but their inspiration was real, and came from God, and these divine powers were perverted—

1. By turning them to purposes of self-aggrandizement.

Now, remember how the true prophets of Jehovah spoke. Simply, with no affectation of mystery, no claims to mystical illumination. They delighted to share their power with their fellows; they said, "The heart of the Lord was with them that fear Him;" that the Lord "dwelt with an humble and contrite heart." They represented themselves as inspired, not because greater or wiser than their brethren, but because more weak, more humble, and dependent upon God.

Contrast Balaam's conduct. Every thing is done to show the difference between him and others—to fix men's attention upon himself—the wonderful, mysterious man who is in communication with Heaven. He builds altars, and uses enchantments. These were a priest's manœuvres, not a prophet's.

He was the solitary self-seeker—alone, isolated, loving to be separated from all other men; admired, feared and sought.

Balak struck the key-note of his character when he said, "Am I not able to promote thee unto honor?" Herein, then, lies the first perversion of glorious gifts: that Balaam sought not God's honor but his own.

2. By making those gifts subservient to his own greed.

It is evident that Balaam half suspected his own failing. Otherwise what mean those vaunts, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold?" Brave men do not vaunt their courage, nor honorable men their honesty, nor do the truly noble boast of high birth. All who understand the human heart perceive a secret sense of weakness in these loud boasts of immaculate purity. Silver and gold, these were the things he loved, and so, not content with communion with God, with the possession of sublime gifts, he thought these only valuable so far as they were means of putting himself in possession of riches. Thus spiritual powers were degraded to make himself a vulgar man of wealth.

There are two opposite motives which sway men. Some, like Simon Magus, will give gold to be admired and wondered at; some will barter honor for gold. In some the two are blended; as in Balaam, we see the desire for honor and wealth—wealth, perhaps, as being another means of insuring reputation. And so have we seen many begin and end in our own day—begin with a high-minded courage which flat-ters none; speaks truth, even unpalatable truth; but when this advocacy of truth brings men, as it brought to Balaam, to consult them, and they rise in the world, or in a court, and become men of consideration, then by degrees the plain truth is sacrificed to a feverish love of notoriety, the love of truth is superseded, and passes into a love of influence.

Or they begin with a generous indifference to wealth—simple, austere; by degrees they find the society of the rich leading them from extravagance to extravagance, till at last high intellectual and high spiritual powers become the servile instruments of appropriating gold. The world sees the sad spectacle of the man of science and the man of God waiting at the doors of princes, or cringing before the public for promotion and admiration.

II. Perversion of conscience.

1. The first intimation we have of the fact that Balaam was tampering with his conscience is in his second appeal to God. On the first occasion God said, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed." Then more honorable messengers were sent from Balak, with larger bribes. Balaam asks permission of God again. Here is the evidence of a secret hollowness in his heart, however fair the outside seemed. In worldly matters, "think twice;" but in duty, it has been well said, "first thoughts are best;" they are more fresh, more pure, have more of God in them. There is nothing like the first glance we get at duty, before there has been any special pleading of our affections or inclinations. Duty is never uncertain at first. It is only after we have got involved in the mazes and sophistries of wishing that things were otherwise than they are that it seems indistinct. Considering a duty is often only explaining it away. Deliberation is often only dishonesty. God's guidance is plain, when we are true.

Let us understand in what Balaam's hollowness consisted. He wanted to please himself without displeasing God. The problem was how to go to Balak, and yet not to offend God. He would have given worlds to get rid of his duty; and he went to God to get his duty altered, not to learn what his duty was. All this rested upon an idea that the will of God *makes* right, instead of *being* right—as if it were a caprice which can be altered, instead of the law of the universe, which can not alter.

How deeply this principle is ingrained in human nature you may see from the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences. The Romish Church permits transgressions for a consideration, and pardons them for the same. Such a doctrine never could have succeeded if the desire and belief were not in man already. What Balaam was doing in this prayer was simply purchasing an indulgence to sin.

2. The second stage is a state of hideous contradictions; God permits Balaam to go, and then is angry with him for going. There is nothing here which can not be interpreted by bitter experience. We must not explain it away by saying that these were only the alternations of Balaam's own mind. They were; but they were the alternations of a mind with which God was expostulating, and to which God appeared differently at different times; the horrible mazes and inconsistencies of a spirit which contradicts itself, and strives to disobey the God whom yet it feels and acknowledges. To such a state of mind God becomes a contradiction. "With the froward"—oh, how true!—"thou wilt show thyself froward." God speaks once, and if that voice be not heard, but is willfully silenced, the second time it utters a terrible permission. God says, "Go," and then is angry. Experience will tell us how God has sent us to reap the fruit of our own willfulness.

3. We notice next the evidences in him of a disordered mind and heart.

We come now to the most difficult portion of the story: "The dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." One of the most profound and pious of modern commentators on this passage has not scrupled to represent the whole transaction as occurring in a vision. Others have thought that Balaam's own heart, smiting him for his cruelty, put, as it were, words into the ass's mouth.

We care not. Let the caviller cavil if he will. There is too much profound truth throughout this narrative for us to care much about either the literal or the figurative interpretation. One thing, however, is clear. Balaam did only what men so entangled always do. The real fault is in themselves. They have committed themselves to a false position, and when obstacles stand in their way, they lay the blame on circumstances. They smite the dumb innocent occasion of their perplexity as if it were the cause. And the passionateness—the "madness" of the act is but an indication that all is going wrong within. There was a canker at the heart of Balaam's life and his equanimity was gone; his temper vented itself on brute things. Who has not seen the like—a grown man, unreasoning as a child, furious beyond the occasion? If you knew the whole, you would see *that* was not the thing which had moved him so terribly; you would see that all was wrong inwardly.

It is a strange, sad picture this. The first man in the land, gifted beyond most others, conscious of great mental power, going on to splendid prospects, yet with hopelessness and misery working at his heart. Who would have envied Balaam if he could have seen all—the hell that was working at his heart?

Lastly, let us consider the impossibility under such circumstances of going back. Balaam offers to go back. The angel says, "Go on." There was yet one hope for him—to be true, to utter God's words careless of the consequences; but he who had been false so long, how should he be true? It was too late. In the ardor of youth you have made perhaps a wrong choice, or chosen an unfit profession, or suffered yourself weakly and passively to be drifted into a false course of action, and now, in spite of yourself, you feel there is no going back. To many minds, such a lot comes as with the mysterious force of a destiny. They see themselves driven, and forget that they put themselves in the way of the stream that drives them. They excuse their own acts as if they were coerced. They struggle now and then faintly, as Balaam did—try to go back—can not—and at last sink passively in the mighty current that floats them on to wrong.

And thenceforth to them all God's intimations will come *unnaturally*. His voice will sound as that of an angel against them in the way. Spectral lights will gleam, only to show a quagmire from which there is no path of extrication. The heavenliest things and the meanest will forbid the madness of the prophet: and yet at the same time seem to say to the weak and vacillating self-seeker, "You have done wrong, and you must do more wrong." Then deepens down a hideous, unnatural, spectral state—the incubus as of a dream of hell, mixed with bitter reminiscences of heaven.

Your secret faults will come out in your life. Therefore we say to you—be true.

V.

SELFISHNESS, AS SHOWN IN BALAAM'S CHARACTER.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"—Num. xxiii. 10.

We acquainted ourselves with the earlier part of Balaam's history last Sunday. We saw how great gifts in him were perverted by ambition and avarice—ambition making them subservient to the admiration of himself; avarice transforming them into mere instruments for accumulating wealth. And we saw how his conscience was gradually perverted by insincerity, till his mind became the place of hideous contradictions, and even God Himself had become to him a lie; with his heart disordered, until the bitterness of all going wrong within vented itself on innocent circumstances, and he found himself so entangled in a false course that to go back was impossible.

Now we come to the second stage. He has been with Balak: he has built his altars, offered his sacrifices, and tried his enchantments, to ascertain whether Jehovah will permit him to curse Israel. And the Voice in his heart, through all, says, "Israel is blest." He looks down from the hill-top, and sees the fair camp of Israel afar off, in beautiful array, their white tents gleaming "as the trees of lignaloes which the Lord had planted." He feels the solitary grandeur of a nation unlike all other nations—people which "shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." A nation too numberless to give Balak any hope of success in the coming war. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" A nation too strong in righteousness for idolaters and enchanters to cope with, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel?" Then follows a personal ejaculation—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Now to prevent the possibility of misconception, or any supposition that Balaam was expressing words whose full significance he did not understand—that when he was speaking of righteousness he had only a heathen notion of it—we refer to the sixth chapter of Micah, from the fifth verse. We will next refer to Numbers xxxi. 8, and Joshua xiii. 22, from whence it appears that he who desired to die the death of the righteous, died the death of the ungodly, and fell, not on the side of the Lord, but fighting against the Lord's cause. The first thing we find in this history of Balaam is an attempt to change the will of God.

Let us clearly understand what was the meaning of all those reiterated sacrifices.

1. Balaam wanted to please himself without displeasing God. The problem was how to go to Balak, and yet not offend God. He would have given worlds to get rid of his duties, and he sacrificed, not to learn what his duty was, but to get his duty altered. Now see the feeling that lay at the root of all this—that God is mutable. Yet of all men one would have thought that Balaam knew better, for had he not said, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it?" But when we look upon it, we see Balaam had scarcely any feeling higher than this—God is more inflexible than man. Probably had he expressed the exact shade of feeling, he would have said, more obstinate. He thought that God had set his heart upon Israel, and that it was hard, yet not impossible, to alter this partiality. Hence he tries sacrifices to bribe, and prayers to coax, God.

How deeply rooted this feeling is in human nature—this belief in God's mutability—you may see from the Romish doctrine of indulgences and atonements. The Romish Church permits crime for certain considerations. For certain considerations it teaches that God will forgive crimes. Atonements after, and indulgences before sin, are the same. But this Romish doctrine never could have succeeded, if the belief in God's mutability and the *desire* that He should be mutable, were not in man already.

What Balaam was doing in these parables, and enchantments, and sacrifices, was simply purchasing an indulgence to sin; in other words, it was an attempt to make the Eternal Mind change. What was wanting for Balaam to feel was this—God *can not* change. What he did feel was this—God *will* not change. There are many writers who teach that this and that is right because God has willed it. All discussion is cut short by the reply, God has determined it, therefore it is right. Now there is exceeding danger in this mode of thought, for a thing is not right because God has willed it, but God wills it because it is right. It is in this tone the Bible always speaks. Never, except in one obscure passage, does the Bible seem to refer right and wrong to the sovereignty of God, and declare it a matter of will; never does it imply that if He so chose, He could reverse evil and good. It says, "Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" was Abraham's exclamation in a kind of hideous doubt whether the Creator might not be on the eve of doing injustice. So the Bible *justifies* the ways of God to man. But it could not do so unless it admitted eternal laws, with which no will can interfere. Nay more, see what ensues from this mode of thought. If right is right because God wills it, then, if God chose, He could make injustice, and cruelty, and lying to be right. This is exactly what Balaam thought. If God could but be prevailed on to hate Israel, then for him to curse them would be right. And again: if power and sovereignty make right, then, supposing the Ruler were a demon, devilish hatred would be as right as now it is wrong. There is great danger in some of our present modes of thinking. It is a common thought that might makes right, but for us there is no rest, no rock, no sure footing, so long as we feel right and wrong are mere matters of will and decree. There is no safety, then, from these hankering feelings and wishes to alter God's decree. You are unsafe until you feel, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word can not pass away."

2. We notice, secondly, an attempt to blind himself. One of the strangest leaves in the book of the human heart is here turned. We observe here perfect veracity with utter want of truth. Balaam was veracious. He will not deceive Balak. Nothing was easier than to get the reward by muttering a spell, knowing all the while that it would not work. Many a European has sold incantations to rich savages for jewels and curiosities, thus enriching himself by deceit. Now Balaam was not supernaturally withheld. That is a baseless assumption. Nothing withheld him but his conscience. No bribe on earth could induce Balaam to say a falsehood—to pretend a curse which was powerless—to get gold, dearly as he loved it, by a pretense. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," was no mere fine saying, but the very truth. You might as soon have turned the sun from his course as induced Balaam to utter falsehood.

And yet, with all this, there was utter truthlessness of heart. Balaam will not utter what is not true; but he will blind himself so that he may not see the truth, and so speak a lie, believing it to be the truth.

He will only speak the thing he feels; but he is not careful to feel all that is true. He goes to another place, where the whole truth may not force itself upon his mind—to a hill where he shall not see the whole of Israel: from hill to hill for the chance of getting to a place where the truth may disappear. But there stands the stubborn fact—Israel is blessed; and he will look at the fact in every way, to see if he can not get it into a position where it shall be seen no longer. Ostrich-like!

Such a character is not so uncommon as, perhaps, we think. There is many a lucrative business which involves misery and wrong to those who are employed in it. The man would be too benevolent to put the gold in his purse if he knew of the misery. But he takes care not to know. There is many a dishonorable thing done at an election, and the principal takes care not to inquire. Many an oppression is exercised on a tenantry, and the landlord receives his rent and asks no questions. Or there is some situation which depends upon the holding of certain religious opinions, and the candidate has a suspicion that if he were to examine, he could not conscientiously profess these opinions, and perchance he takes care not to examine.

3. Failing in all these evil designs against Israel, Balaam tries his last expedient to ruin them, and that partially succeeds.

He recommends Balak to use the fascination of the daughters of Moab to entice the Israelites into idolatry. (Num. xxxi. 15, 16. Rev. ii. 14). He has tried enchantments and sacrifices in vain to reverse God's will. He has tried in vain to think that will is reversed. It will not do. He feels at last that God has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. Now therefore, he tries to reverse the character of these favorites, and so to reverse God's will. God will not curse the good; therefore Balaam tries to make them wicked; he tries to make the good curse themselves, and so exasperate God.

A more diabolical wickedness we can scarcely conceive. Yet Balaam was an honorable man and a veracious man; nay, a man of delicate conscientiousness and unconquerable scruples—a man of lofty religious professions, highly respectable and respected. The Lord of heaven and earth has said there is such a thing as "straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel."

There are men who would not play false, and yet would wrongly win. There are men who would not lie, and yet who would bribe a poor man to support a cause which he believes in his soul to be false. There are men who would resent at the sword's point the charge of dishonor, who would yet for selfish gratification entice the weak into sin, and damn body and soul in hell. There are men who would be shocked at being called traitors, who in time of war will yet make a fortune by selling arms to their country's foes. There are men respectable and respected, who give liberally and support religious societies, and go to church, and would not take God's name in vain, who have made wealth, in some trade of opium or spirits, out of the wreck of innumerable human lives. Balaam is one of the accursed spirits now, but he did no more than these are doing.

Now see what lay at the root of all this hollowness: selfishness.

From first to last one thing appears uppermost in this history—Balaam's self;—the honor of Balaam as a true prophet—therefore he will not lie; the wealth of Balaam—therefore the Israelites must be sacrificed. Nay more, even in his sublimest visions his egotism breaks out. In the sight of God's Israel he cries, "Let *me* die the death of the righteous:" in anticipation of the glories of the eternal advent, "*I* shall behold Him, but not nigh." He sees the vision of a kingdom, a Church, a chosen people, a triumph of righteousness. In such anticipations, the nobler prophets broke out into strains in which their own personality was forgotten. Moses, when he thought that God would destroy His people, prays in agony—"Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sins;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." Paul speaks in impassioned words—"I have continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." But Balaam's chief feeling seems to be, "How will all this advance *me?*" And the magnificence of the prophecy is thus marred by a chord of melancholy and diseased egotism. Not for one moment—even in those moments when uninspired men gladly forget themselves; men who have devoted themselves to a monarchy or dreamed of a republic in sublime self-abnegation—can Balaam forget himself in God's cause.

Observe, then: desire for personal salvation is not religion. It *may* go with it, but it is not religion. Anxiety for the state of one's own soul is not the healthiest or best symptom. Of course every one wishes, "Let me die the death of the righteous." But it is one thing to wish to be saved, another to wish God's right to triumph; one thing to wish to die safe, another to wish to live holily. Nay, not only is this desire for personal salvation not religion, but if soured, it passes into hatred of the good. Balaam's feeling became spite against the people who are to be blessed when he is not blessed. He indulges a wish that good may not prosper, because personal interests are mixed up with the failure of good.

We see anxiety about human opinion is uppermost. Throughout we find in Balaam's character semblances, not realities. He would not transgress a rule, but he would violate a principle. He would not say white was black, but he would sully it till it looked black.

Now consider the whole.

A bad man prophesies under the fear of God, restrained by conscience, full of poetry and sublime feelings, with a full clear view of death as dwarfing life, and the blessedness of righteousness as compared with wealth. And yet we find him striving to disobey God, hollow and unsound at heart; using for the devil wisdom and gifts bestowed by God; sacrificing all with a gambler's desperation, for name and wealth: tempting a nation to sin, and crime, and ruin; separated in selfish isolation from all mankind; superior to Balak, and yet feeling that Balak knew him to be a man that had his price; with the bitter anguish of being despised by the men who were inferior to himself; forced to conceive of a grandeur in which he had no share, and a righteousness in which he had no part. Can you not conceive the end of one with a mind so torn and distracted?—the death in battle; the insane frenzy with which he would rush into the field, and finding all go against him, and that lost for which he had bartered heaven, after having died a thousand worse than deaths, find death at last upon the spears of the Israelites?

In application, we remark: 1st. The danger of great powers. It is an awful thing, this conscious power to see more, to feel more, to know more than our fellows.

2d. But let us mark well the difference between feeling and doing.

It is possible to have sublime feelings, great passions, even great sympathies with the race, and yet not to love man. To feel mightily, is one thing, to live truly and charitably, another. Sin may be felt at the core, and yet not be cast out. Brethren, beware. See how a man may be going on uttering fine words, orthodox truths, and yet be rotten at the heart.

VI.

THE TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."—Psalm xc. 12.

This is the key-note of the 90th Psalm. It numbers sadly the days and vicissitudes of human life; but it does this, not for the sake of mere sentiment, but rather for practical purposes, that it may furnish a motive for a wiser life of the heart. We know nothing of the Psalm except that it was the composition of "Moses, the man of God." It was written evidently in the wilderness, after years of apparently fruitless wandering: its tone is that of deep sadness—retrospective; its images are borrowed from the circumstances of the pilgrimage—the mountain-flood, the grass, the night-watch of an army on the march.

See here, again, what is meant by inspiration. Observe the peculiarly human character of this Psalm. Moses, "the man of God," is commissioned not to tell truths superhuman, but truths emphatically human. The utterances of this Psalm are true to nature. Moses felt as we feel, only God gave him a voice to interpret, and he felt more deeply than all, what all in their measure feel. His inspiration lay not in this, that he was gifted with legislative wisdom; but rather in this, that his bosom vibrated truly and healthfully to every note of the still sad music of humanity. We will consider—

I. The feelings suggested by a retrospect of the past.
II. The right direction of those feelings.

1. The analogies of nature which correspond with human life. All the images in this Psalm are suggested by the circumstances of their forty years' pilgrimage. Human life felt to be like a flood—the withering grass—a sleep broken—the pain—the start—death—the awakening—a night-watch—a tale told, whose progress we watched with interest, but of which when done the impression alone remains, the words are gone forever. These are not artificial images, but natural. They are not similes forced by the writer into his service because of their prettiness, but similes which forced themselves on him by their truthfulness. Now this is God's

arrangement. All things here are double. The world without corresponds with the world within. No man could look on a stream when alone by himself, and all noisy companionship overpowering good thoughts was away, without the thought that just so his own particular current of life will fall at last into the " unfathomable gulf where all is still."

No man can look upon a field of corn, in its yellow ripeness, which he has passed weeks before when it was green, or a convolvulus withering as soon as plucked, without experiencing a chastened feeling of the fleetingness of all earthly things.

No man ever went through a night-watch in the bivouac, when the distant hum of men and the random shot fired told of possible death on the morrow; or watched in a sick-room, when time was measured by the sufferer's breathing or the intolerable ticking of the clock, without a firmer grasp on the realities of life and time.

So God walks His appointed rounds through the year: and every season and every sound has a special voice for the varying phases of our manifold existence. Spring comes, when earth unbosoms her mighty heart to God, and anthems of gratitude seem to ascend from every created thing. It is something deeper than an arbitrary connection which compels us to liken this to the thought of human youth.

And then comes summer, with its full stationariness, its noontide heat, its dust, and toil, an emblem of ripe manhood. The interests of youth are gone by. The interest of a near grave has not yet come. Its duty is work. And afterwards autumn, with its mournfulness, its pleasant melancholy, tells us of coming rest and quiet calm.

And now has come winter again. This is the last Sunday in the year.

It is not a mere preacher's voice performing an allotted task. The call and correspondence are real. The young have felt the melancholy of the last two months. With a transient feeling—even amounting to a luxury—the prophetic soul within us anticipates with sentiment the real gloom of later life, and enables us to sympathize with what we have not yet experienced. The old have felt it as no mere romance—an awful fact—a correspondence between the world without and the world within. We have all felt it in the damp mist, in the slanting shadows, the dimmer skies, the pale, watery glow of the red setting sun, shorn of half its lustre. In the dripping of the woodland, in the limp leaves trodden by heaps into clay, in the depressing north wind, in the sepulchral cough of the aged man at the corner of the street under the inclement sky, God has said to us, as He said to Moses, "Pause, and number thy days, for they are numbered."

2. There is also a sense of loss. Every sentence tells us that this Psalm was written after a long period was past. It was retrospective, not prospective. Moses is looking back, and his feeling is *loss*. How much was lost? Into that flood of time how much had fallen? Many a one consumed, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, by the wrath of God. Many a Hebrew warrior stricken in battle, and over him a sand-heap. And those who remembered these things were old men—"*consuming*," his strong expression, "their strength in labor and sorrow."

Such is life! At first, all seems given. We are acquiring associations, sensations, new startling feelings; then comes the time when all give pleasure or pain by association—by touching some old chord which vibrates again. And after that, all is loss—something gone, and more is going. Every day, every year—this year, like all others. Into that flood have fallen treasures that will not be recovered. Intimacies have been dissolved that will not be reunited. Affections cooled, we can not say why. Many a ship foundered, and the brave hearts in her will be seen no more till the sea shall give up her dead. Many a British soldier fallen before Asiatic pestilence, or beneath the Kaffir assegai, above him the bush or jungle is waving green, but he himself is now where the rifle's ring is heard, and the sabre's glitter is seen, no more. Many a pew before me is full, which at the beginning of the year was filled by others. Many a hearth-stone is cold, and many a chair is empty that will not be filled again. We stand upon the shore of that illimitable sea which never restores what has once fallen into it; we hear only the boom of the waves that throb over all—forever.

3. There is, too, an apparent non-attainment.

A deeper feeling pervades this Psalm than that of mere transitoriness: it is that of the impotency of human effort. "We are consumed"—perish aimlessly like the grass. No man was more likely to feel this than Moses. After forty years, the slaves he had emancipated were in heart slaves still—idolators. He called them rebels, and shattered the stone tables of the law, in sad and bitter disappointment. After forty years the promised land was not reached. He himself never entered it.

No wonder if life appeared to him like a stream, not merely transitory, but monotonous. Generation after generation, and no change; much lost, apparently nothing was won. No prospect of better time had been. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be." Here, too, is one of the great trials of all retrospect—the great trial of all earthly life.

The cycles of God's providences are so large that our narrow lives scarcely measure a visible portion of them. So large that we ask, What can we effect? Yet there is an almost irrepressible wish in our hearts to see success attend our labors, to enter the promised land in our own life. It is a hard lesson: to toil in faith and to die in the wilderness, not having attained the promises, but only seeing them afar off.

So in the past year, personally and publicly. Personally we dare not say that we are better than we were at the beginning. Can we say that we are purer? more earnest? Has the lesson of the cross been cut sharply into our hearts? Have we only learned self-denial, to say nothing of self-sacrifice? And stagnation thus being apparently the case, or at most but very slow progress, the thought comes, Can such beings be destined for immortality?

On a larger scale, the young cries of freedom which caused all generous hearts to throb with sympathy have been stifled; itself trodden down beneath the iron heel of despotism all over Europe and rendered frantic and ferocious. Can we wish for its success? Are the better times coming at all? So does the heart sicken over the past. Every closing year seems to say, Shall we begin the old useless struggle over again? Shall we tell again the oft-told tale? Are not these hopes, so high, a mockery to a moth like man? Is all but a mere illusion, a mirage in the desert? Are the waters of life and home ever near, yet never reached, and the dry hot desert sand his only attainment?

Let us consider—

II. The right use of these sad suggestions. "So teach us to number our days."

"So," because the days may be numbered, as in this Psalm, and the heart *not* applied to wisdom. There are two ways in which days may be numbered to no purpose.

1. That of the Epicurean—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." There is a strong tendency to reckless enjoyment when the time is felt to be short, and religion does not exist to restrain.

[For example. In times of plague—Athens—Milan—London—danger only stimulates men to seize to-day the enjoyments which may not be theirs to-morrow. Again, at the close of the last century, when the prisons of Paris resounded with merriment, dance, and acting, a light and trivial people, atheists at heart, could extract from an hourly impending death no deeper lesson than this, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."]

2. That of the sentimentalist.

It is no part of our Christian duty to think of decay in an abject spirit. That which the demoniac in the Gospels did, having his dwelling among the tombs, has sometimes been reckoned the perfection of Christian unworldliness. Men have looked on every joy as a temptation; on every earnest pursuit as a snare—the skull and the hour-glass their companions, curtaining life with melancholy, haunting it with visions and emblems of mortality. This is not Christianity.

Rather it is so to dwell on the thoughts of death "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." If the history of these solemn truths does not stimulate us to duty and action, it were no duty to remind ourselves of them. Rather the reverse. Better shut out such gloomy and useless thoughts. But there is a way of dwelling amidst these facts which solemnizes life instead of paralyzing it. He is best prepared to meet change who sees it at a distance and contemplates it calmly. Affections are never deepened and refined until the possibility of loss is felt. Duty is done with all energy, then only, when we feel, "The night cometh, when no man can work," in all its force.

Two thoughts are presented to make this easier.

1. The eternity of God. "Before the mountains were brought forth, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." With God there is no Time—it is one eternal Now. This is made conceivable to us by a recent writer, who has reminded us that there are spots in the universe which have not yet been reached by the beams of light which shone from this earth at its creation. If, therefore, we are able on an angel's wings to reach that spot in a second or two of time, the sight of this globe would be just becoming visible as it was when chaos passed into beauty. A few myriads of miles nearer, we should be met by the picture of the world in the state of deluge. And so in turn would present themselves the spectacles of patriarchal life; of Assyrian, Grecian, Persian, Roman civilization; and, at a short distance from the earth, the scenes of yesterday. Thus a mere transposition in space would make the past present. And thus, all that we need is the annihilation of space to annihilate time. So that if we conceive a Being present everywhere in space, to Him all past events would be present. At the remotest extremity of the angel's journey, he would see the world's creation:

at this extremity, the events that pass before our eyes to-day. Omnipresence in space is thus equivalent to ubiquity in time. And to such a being, demonstrably, there would be no Time. All would be one vast eternal Now.

Apply this to practical wisdom. And this comes in to correct our despondency. For with God, "a thousand years are as one day." In the mighty cycles in which God works, our years and ages are moments. It took fifteen hundred years to educate the Jewish nation. We wonder that Moses saw nothing in forty years. But the thought of the eternity of God was his consolation. And so, shall we give up our hopes of heaven and progress, because it is so slow, when we remember that God has innumerable ages before Him? Or our hopes for our personal improvement, when we recollect our immortality in Him who has been our refuge "from generation to generation?" Or for our schemes and plans which seem to fail, when we remember that they will grow after us, like the grass above our graves?

II. Next, consider the permanence of results. Read the conclusion of the Psalm, "Prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, oh prosper Thou our handiwork." It is a bright conclusion for a Psalm so dark and solemn. To correct the gloom that comes from brooding on decay, it is good to remember that there is a sense in which nothing perishes.

1. The permanence of our past seasons. Spring, summer, autumn, are gone, but the harvest is gathered in. Youth and manhood are passed, but their lessons have been learnt. The past is ours only when it is gone. We do not understand the meaning of our youth, our joys, our sorrows, till we look at them from a distance. We lose them to get them back again in a deeper way. The past is our true inheritance, which nothing can take from us. Its sacred lessons, its pure affections, are ours forever. Nothing but the annihilation of our being could rob us of them.

2. The permanence of lost affections. Over the departed ones Moses mourned. But take his own illustration—"A tale that is told." The sound and words are gone, but the tale is indelibly impressed on the heart. So the lost are not really lost. Perhaps they are ours only truly when lost. Their patience, love, wisdom, are sacred now, and live in us. The apostles and prophets are more ours than they were the property of the generation who saw their daily life—"He being dead, yet speaketh."

3. The permanence of our own selves—"The beauty of

the Lord our God be upon us." Very striking this. We survive. We are what the past has made us. The results of the past are ourselves. The perishable emotions, and the momentary acts of bygone years, are the scaffolding on which we build up the being that we are. As the tree is fertilized by its own broken branches and fallen leaves, and grows out by its own decay, so is the soul of man ripened out of broken hopes and blighted affections. The law of our humanity is the common law of the universe—life out of death, beauty out of decay. Not till those fierce young passions, over the decay of which the old man grieves, have been stilled into silence; not until the eye has lost its fire, and the cheek its hot flush, can " the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"—the beauty of a spirit subdued, chastened, and purified by loss.

4. Let us correct these sad thoughts by the thought of the permanence of work. " Prosper thou the *work* of our hands." Feelings pass, thoughts and imaginations pass: dreams pass: work remains. Through eternity, what you have done, that you are. They tell us that not a sound has ever ceased to vibrate through space; that not a ripple has ever been lost upon the ocean. Much more is it true that, not a true thought, nor a pure resolve, nor a loving act, has ever gone forth in vain.

So then we will end our year.

Amidst the solemn lessons taught to the giddy traveller as he journeys on by a Nature hastening with gigantic footsteps down to a winter grave, and by the solemn tolling of the bell of Time, which tells us that another, and another, and another, is gone before us, we will learn, not the lesson of the sensualist—enjoy while you can: not that of the feeble sentimentalist—mourn, for nothing lasts: but that of the Christian—work cheerfully.

" The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."
" Oh, prosper Thou our handiwork."

VII.

VIEWS OF DEATH.

"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool."—Eccles. ii. 15, 16.

This is the inspired record of a peculiar view of life. Paul, with his hopefulness of disposition, could not have written it, neither could John, with his loving, trustful spirit. We involuntarily ask who wrote this? Was it written by a voluptuary—a skeptic—or a philosopher? What sort of man was it?

We detect the sated voluptuary in the expressions of the first eleven verses of this chapter. We see the skeptic in those of the 19th to the 22d verses of the third chapter. And the philosopher, who in avoidance of all extremes seeks the golden medium, is manifested in such a maxim as "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" Or was it written by a man deeply and permanently inspired?

I believe it to have been written by none of these, or rather by all four. It records different experiences of the same mind—different moods in which he viewed life in different ways. It is difficult to interpret, or to separate them; for he says nothing by which they can be marked off and made distinct from each other. Nowhere does Solomon say, "I thought so then, but that was only a mood, a phase of feeling that I have since seen was false, and is now corrected by the experience and expressions of the present." Here is, at first sight, nothing but inextricable confusion and false conclusions.

The clue to the whole is to be found in the interpreter's own heart. It is necessary to make these few preliminary remarks, as there is a tone of disappointment which runs through all this book, which is not the tone of the Bible in general. Two lines of thought are suggested by the text.

I. The mysterious aspect presented by death.
II. That state of heart in which it is mysterious no longer.

I. To Solomon, in his mood of darkness, "there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever." But it is not only in moods of dark perplexity, it is *always* a startling thing to see the rapidity with which the wisest and the best are forgotten. We plough our lives in water, leaving no furrow; two little waves break upon the shore, but no further vestige of our existence is left.

[An accident happens to one of England's greatest sons; an announcement is made which stagnates the blood in a country's veins for a moment, and then all returns to its former channel.—(Tennyson. "In Memoriam." "Let them rave," he sleeps well.)

Country church-yard—yew-tree—upheaving roots clasping round bones—a striking fact that vegetable life outlives and outlasts animal life.]

There is something exquisitely painful in the thought that we die out and are forgotten; therefore it is, that in the higher walks of life people solace themselves with the hope of posthumous reputation; they think, perhaps, that *then* only their true worth will be known. That posthumous reputation! when the eye is forever closed, and the heart forever chilled here—what matters it to him, whether storms rage over his grave or men cherish his memory? he sleeps well. The commentators on this book have disagreed among themselves about Solomon's character—some have even doubted whether he was finally saved or no. What matters it to him now what is said of him? what does it signify to him what posterity thinks of him? And so with us all: to the ear that is turned into dust the voice of praise or of censure is indifferent. One thing is certain. God says, "Time is short, eternity is long." The solemn tolling of the bell seems to cry, There is something to be done; there is much to be done; do it! and that quickly!

Then again there are some who say, "What use is there in doing any thing in this world? It scarcely seems worth while, in this brief span of life, to try do any thing." A man is placed in a high situation, receives an expensive education at school and college, and a still more expensive one of time and experience. And then, just when we think all this ripe wisdom, garnered up from so many fields, shall find its fullest use, we hear that all is over, he has passed from among us, and then the question, hideous in its suggestiveness, arises, "Why was he then more wise?"

Asked from this world's stand-point—if there is no life beyond the grave, if there is no immortality, if all spiritual calculation is to end here, why, then the mighty work of God is all to end in nothingness: but if this is only a state of infancy, only the education for eternity, in which the soul is to gain its wisdom and experience for higher work, then to ask why such a mind is taken from us is just as absurd as to question why the tree of the forest has its first training in the nursery garden. This is but the nursery ground, from whence we are to be transplanted into the great forest of God's eternal universe. There is an absence of all distinction between the death of one man and another. The wise man dies as the fool with respect to circumstances.

In our short-sightedness we think there ought to be a certain correspondence between the man and the mode of the man's death. We fancy the warrior should die upon the battle-plain, the statesman at his post, the mean man should die in ignorance: but it is not so ordered in God's world, for the wise man dies as the fool, the profligate man dies as the hero. Sometimes for the great and wise is reserved a contemptuous death, a mere accident; *then*, he who is not satisfied unless the external reality corresponds with the inward hope, imagines that circumstances such as these can not be ordained by Eternal Love, but rather by the spirit of a mocking demon.

There is always a disappointment of our expectations. No man ever lived whose acts were not smaller than himself. We often look forward to the hour of death in which a man shall give vent to his greater and nobler emotions. The hour comes, and the wise man dies as the fool. In the first place, in the case of holiness and humbleness, thoughts of deep despondency and dark doubt often gather round the heart of the Christian in his last hour, and the narrow-minded man interprets that into God's forgetfulness; or else delirium shrouds all in silence; or else there are only commonplace words, words tender, touching, and gentle, but in themselves nothing. Often there is nothing that marks the great man from the small man. *This* is the mystery of death.

II. It depends on causes within us and not without us. Three things are said by the man of pleasure:—1. That all things happen by chance. 2. That there is nothing new 3. That all is vanity, and nothing is stable.

There is a strange special penalty which God annexes to a life of pleasure: Every thing appears to the worldly man as a tangled web—a maze to which there is no clue. Another man says, "There is nothing new under the sun." This is the state of the man who lives merely for excitement and pleasure—his heart becomes so jaded by excitement that the world contains nothing for him which can awaken fresh or new emotions. Then, again, a third says, "All is vanity." This is the state of him who is afloat on the vast ocean of excitement, and who feels that life is nothing but a fluctuating, changeful, heartless scene.

Some who read the Book of Ecclesiastes think that there is a sadness and uneasiness in its tone inconsistent with the idea of inspiration—that it is nothing but a mere kaleidoscope, with endlessly shifting moods. Therein lies the proof of its inspiration. Its value lies as much in the way of warning as of precept. Live for yourself here—live the mere life of pleasure, and then all is confusion and bewilderment of mind; then the view which the mighty mind of Solomon took, inspired by God, will be yours: life will seem as nothing, and death a mere mockery. Be in harmony with the mind of Christ, have the idea He had, be one with Him, and you shall understand the machinery of this world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." To the humble pious heart there is no mystery. The world is intelligible only to a mind in harmony with the Mind that made it. Else all is confusion, unless you are in possession of His idea, moved by His Spirit.

Hence it lies in a pure heart much more than in a clear intellect, to understand the mystery of life and death. Solomon's wisdom has left us only a confused idea.

Turn we now from the views of Solomon to the life of the Son of Man. Men asked, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He gave a different explanation of His wisdom. "My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

He gives directions to us how to gain the same discernment. "If any man will do His will, he shall know."

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[One has just been taken from us to whom all eyes turned—Sir Robert Peel.]

VIII.

WAITING FOR THE SECOND ADVENT.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."—2 Thess. iii. 5.

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians contain, more expressly than any other, St. Paul's views respecting the second Advent of Christ. The first epistle was written to correct certain enthusiastic views respecting that coming. But the second epistle tells us that the effort had failed. For in the mean while, another epistle had been forged in St. Paul's name, asserting that the day was near, and so opening the floodgates of fanaticism. To counteract this, he tells them not to be shaken in mind by any word or letter as from him, as that the day of Christ was at hand. And, contrary to his usual practice, he writes the salutation at the close with his own hand, making it a test hereafter of the genuineness of his epistles.

Let us try to paint a picture of the state of the Thessalonian Church. Such phenomena had appeared as might have been expected to arise from a belief that the end of the world was near. Men forsook their stated employments; the poor would not work, but expected to be maintained by their richer brethren. Men, being idle, spent their time in useless discussions, neglected their own affairs, gossipped, and indulged a prying curiosity into the affairs of others. Hence arose the necessity for the admonition—"Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you;" and so the apostle had said, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."

Moreover, two opposite lines of conduct were adopted by persons of different temperament. Some greedily received every wild tale and mysterious prediction of the Advent, and listened eagerly to every fanatic who could work upon the vulgar credulity. Others, perceiving that there was so much imposture, concluded that it was safest to believe nothing; and accordingly were skeptical of every claim to inspiration. In admonition of the first class, St. Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." In admonition of the second, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings."

The opposite tendencies of skepticism and credulity will be found very near together in all ages. Some men refusing to believe that God speaks in the signs of the times; others running after every book on prophecy, seeking after signs, believing in miracles and imposture, mesmerisms, electro-biologies, winking pictures—any thing provided it be marvellous—it is the same state of mind exactly!

To meet the evil of this feverish, disturbed state of the Thessalonian Church, St. Paul takes two grounds. He first points out the signs which will precede the second Advent: Self-idolatry, excluding the worship of God. Sinful humanity, "the man of sin," in the temple of God. And this self-worship deceiving by a show of godliness, and a power apparently miraculous (such as our present self-laudations, philanthropies, marvellous triumphs as with Divine power, over the material world). Besides this, punishment of falsehood on the rejection of the true. These signs worked then and now. St. Paul discerned the general law of Christ's kingdom and its development as applicable to all epochs down to the last. But next, St. Paul called the Church away from this feverishness to the real preparation for the Advent. The Church was on the tiptoe of expectation, and prepared in the way above described. St. Paul summons them to a real but not excited preparation. And this in two things:—1. The love of God. 2. Patience of the saints. We consider—

I. Preparation for the Redeemer's coming: the love of God.

1. The love of God is the love of goodness. The old Saxon word God is identical with Good. God the Good One—personified goodness. There is in that derivation not a mere play of words—there is a deep truth. None loves God but he who loves good. To love God is to love what God is. God is pure, and he who loves purity can love God. God is true. God is just; and he who loves these things out of God may love them in God; and God for them, because He is good, and true, and pure, and just.

No other love is real; none else lasts. For example, love based on a belief of personal favors will not endure. You may be very happy, and believe that God has made you happy. While that happiness lasts you will love God. But a time comes when happiness goes. You will not be always young and prosperous. A time may come when misfortunes will accumulate on you as on Job. At last, Job had nothing left but life. The natural feeling would be, "Curse God and die." Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Plainly Job had some other reason for his love than personal favors. God, the all-pure, all-just, all-holy, adorable, *because* all-holy. Or again, you believe that Christ's sufferings have purchased heaven for you. Well, you are grateful. But suppose your evidence of personal salvation fades, what then?

Here, however, let me make a remark. The love of goodness only becomes real by *doing* good. Without this it remains merely a sickly sentiment. It gets body and reality by acting. For example, we have been prating since the Great Duke's death, of duty. Know we not that by merely *talking* of duty our profession of admiration for duty will become a cant? This is a truth a minister of Christ feels deeply. It is his business to be talking to others of self-sacrifice and devotedness. He of all men feels how little these words mean, unless they are acted out. For an indolent habit of admiring goodness is got easily, and is utterly without profit. Hence Christ says, "Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven;" and hence, too, "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments, and I will love him;" "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." The love of goodness is real and healthy only when we *do* it.

2. The love of God is the love of man expanded and purified. It is a deep truth that we can not begin with loving God, we must begin with loving man. It is an awful command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind." It is awful and impossible at first. Interrogate the child's conscience, he does not love God supremely; he loves his mother, and his sister, and his brother more. Now this is God's plan of nature. Our special human affections are given us to expand into a diviner charity. We are learning "by a mortal yearning to ascend." Our affections wrap themselves round beings who are created in God's image; then they expand, widen in their range; become less absorbed, more calm, less passionate, more philan-

thropic. They become more pure, less selfish. Love was given, encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for this end— . . . . that self might be annulled. The testimony of St. John is decisive on this point. To him we appeal as to the apostle who knew best what love is. His love to God was unearthly, pure, spiritual; his religion had melted into love. Let us listen to his account. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us;" "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

According to him, the thought of the invisible God is intolerable. It would be shorn of its dazzling splendor by being exhibited in our brethren. So we can gaze on the reflected sunlight on the moon. According to him, it is through the visible that we appreciate the invisible—through the love of our brother that we grow into the love of God.

An awful day is coming to us all—the day of Christ. A day of triumph, but of judgment too. Terrible language describes it, "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood." God shall be felt as He never has been yet. How shall we prepare for that august sight? Not by unnatural, forced efforts at loving Him whom no eye can see and live; but by much persistence in the appointed path of our common affections, our daily intercourse, the talk man holds with man in the hourly walk of the world's intercourse. By being true to our attachments. Let not a humble Christian be over-anxious, if his spiritual affections are not as keen as he would wish. The love of God is the full-blown flower of which the love of man is the bud. To love man is to love God. To do good to man will be recognized hereafter as doing good to Christ. These are the Judge's words: "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

3. Personal affections.

[Guard what is now said from any appearance of representing it as actually attained by the person who describes it. The love of God is a fearful and a lovely thing; but they who have reached it are the few.]

It is not merely love of goodness, but love of goodness concentrated on the Good One. Not merely the love of man, but the love of man expanded into the love of Him, of whom all that we have seen of gentle and lovely, of true and tender, of honorable and bright in human character, are but the shadows and the broken, imperfect lights.

It is here that the Jewish religion is the chief trainer of the world. Revelation began with the personality of God. All the Jew's discipline taught him this: that the law of right was the will of a lawgiver. Deliverance from Egyptian slavery, or Assyrian invasion, was always associated with the name of a deliverer. Moses and the prophets were His messengers and mediators. "Thus saith the Lord," is ever the preface of their message.

Consequently, only from Jews, and Christians trained through the Old Testament to know God, do we hear those impassioned expressions of personal love, which give us a sublime conception of the adoration of which human hearts are capable. Let us hear David—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee;" "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God." And that glorious outburst of St. Paul: "Let God be true, and every man a liar," which can be understood only by those who feel that the desertion of all, and the discovery of the falseness of all, would be as nothing compared with a single doubt of the faithfulness of God.

II. The other preparation is the patient waiting.

1. What is waited for?—an Advent of Christ. We must extend the ordinary meaning of this expression. There are many comings of Christ.

Christ came in the flesh as a Mediatorial Presence.

Christ came at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Christ came, a Spiritual Presence, when the Holy Ghost was given.

Christ comes now in every signal manifestation of redeeming power.

Any great reformation of morals and religion is a coming of Christ.

A great revolution, like a thunderstorm, violently sweeping the evil away, to make way for the good, is a coming of Christ.

Christ will come at the end of the world, when the Spirit of all these comings will be concentrated.

Thus we may understand in what way Christ is ever coming and ever near. Why it was that St. James said, "Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" and "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." And we shall also understand how it was that the early Church was not deceived in expecting Christ in their own day. He *did* come, though not in the way they expected.

2. What is meant by "waiting?"

Now it is remarkable that throughout the apostle's writings, the Christian attitude of soul is represented as an attitude of expectation—as in this passage, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and again, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience *wait* for it." Salvation in hope: that was their teaching. Not a perfection attained, but a perfection that is to be.

The golden age lies onward. We are longing for, not the Church of the past, but the Church of the future. Ours is not an antiquated, sentimental yearning for the imaginary perfection of ages gone by, not a conservative stagnation content with things as they are, but *hope*—for the individual and for the society. By Him we have access by faith, and rejoice in hope of the glory that shall be revealed. A better, wiser, purer age than that of childhood. An age more enlightened and more holy than the world has yet seen. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." It is this spirit of expectation which is the preparation for the Advent. Every gift of noble origin is breathed upon by hope's perfect breath.

3. Let us note that it is *patient* waiting.

Every one who has ardently longed for any spiritual blessing knows the temptation to impatience in expecting it. Good men who, like Elijah, have sickened over the degeneracy and luxury of their times; fathers who have watched the obduracy and wild career of a child whom they have striven in vain to lead to God; such cry out from the deeps of the heart, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Now the true preparation is, not having correct ideas of how and when He shall come, but being like Him. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power;" "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Application. "The Lord direct you" unto this.

Consider what the Thessalonians must have felt in their perplexity. Would that we had a teacher such as St. Paul, ever at hand to tell us what is truth—to distinguish between fanaticism and genuine enthusiasm—between wild false teaching and truth rejected by the many. "Here," might they have said, "were we bewildered. How shall we hereafter avoid similar bewilderments without an infallible guide?" Instead of which St. Paul says, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

God has so decreed, that except in childhood, our dependence must be on our own souls. "The way of truth is slow, hard, winding, often turning on itself." Good and evil grow up in the field of the world almost inseparably. The scanning of error is necessary to the comprehension and belief of truth. Therefore it must be done solitarily. Nay, such an infallible guide could not be given to us without danger. Such a one ever near would prove not a guide to us, but a hindrance to the use of our own eyes and souls. Reverence for such a guide would soon degenerate into slavishness, passiveness, and prostration of mind.

Hence, St. Paul throws us upon God.

IX.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."—1 John iii. 4, 5.

The heresy with which the Apostle St. John had to contend in his day was an error of a kind and character which it is hard for us with our practical, matter-of-fact modes of thinking, to comprehend. There were men so over-refined and fastidious, that they could not endure the thought of any thing spiritual being connected with materialism. They could not believe in any thing being pure that was also fleshly, for flesh and sinfulness were to them synonymous terms. They could not believe in the Divine humanity, for humanity was to them the very opposite of that which was Divine: and accordingly, while admitting the Divinity of Jesus, they denied the reality of His materialism. They said of His earthly life exactly what the Roman Catholic says of the miracle he claims to be performed in the Supper of the Lord. The Roman Catholic maintains that it is simply an illusion of the senses; there is the taste of the bread, the look of the bread, the smell of the bread, but it is all a deception: there is no bread really there, it is only the spiritual body of the Lord. That which the Romanist says now of the elements in the Lord's Supper, did these ancient here tics say respecting the body and the life of Jesus. There was, they said, the sound of the human voice, there was the passing from place to place, there were deeds done, there were sufferings undergone, but these were all an illusion and a phantasma — a thing that appeared, but did not really exist. The everlasting Word of God was making itself known to the minds of men through the senses by an illusion; for to say that the Word of God was made flesh, to maintain that He connected Himself with sinful, frail humanity—this was degradation to the Word—this was destruction to the purity of the Divine Essence.

You will observe that in all this there was an attempt to be eminently spiritual; and what seems exceedingly marvellous, is the fact withal that these men led a life of extreme licentiousness. Yet it is not marvellous, if we think accurately, for we find even now that over-refinement is but coarseness. And so, just in the same way, these ultra-spiritualists, though they would not believe that the Divine Essence could be mingled with human nature without degradation, yet they had no intention of elevating human nature by their own conduct. They thought they showed great respect for Jesus in all this: they denied the reality of his sufferings; they would not admit the conception that frail, undignified humanity was veritably His, but nevertheless they had no intention of living more spiritually themselves.

It was therefore that we find in another epistle, St. John gives strict commands to his converts not to admit these heretics into their houses: and the reason that he gives is, that by so doing they would be partakers, not of their evil doctrines, but of their evil deeds. They were a licentious set of men, and it is necessary to keep this in view if we would understand the writings of St. John. It is for this reason, therefore, that he says—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you." It is for this reason that he, above all the apostles, narrates with scrupulous accuracy all the particulars respecting the Redeemer's risen body—that he joined in the repast of the broiled fish and the honey-comb: and that he dwells with such minuteness on the fact that there came from the body of the Redeemer blood and water: "Not water only, but water and blood;" and it is for this reason that in speaking of Antichrist he says, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come."

So, then, we learn from this that the most spiritual of all the apostles was the one who insisted most earnestly on the materialism of the human nature of our Lord. He who alone had penetrated into that realm beyond, where the King was seen on His throne of light, was the one who felt most strongly that in humanity there is nothing degrading. In the natural propensities of human nature there is nothing to be ashamed of: there is nothing for a man to be ashamed of but sin—there is nothing more noble than a perfect human nature.

My brethren, though the error of the ancient times can not be repeated in this age in the same form, though this strange belief commends itself not to our minds, yet there may be such an exclusive dwelling upon the Divinity of Jesus as absolutely to destroy His real humanity; there may be such a morbid sensitiveness when we speak of Him as taking our nature, as will destroy the fact of His sufferings—yes, and destroy the reality of His atonement also. There is a way of speaking of the sinlessness of Jesus that would absolutely make that scene on Calvary a mere pageant in which He was acting a part in a drama, during which He was not really suffering, and did not really crush the propensities of His human nature. It was for this reason we lately dwelt on the Redeemer's sufferings; now let us pass onward to the fact of the sinlessness of His nature.

The subject divides itself—first, into the sinlessness of His nature; and secondly, the power which He possessed from that sinlessness to take away the sins of the world.

With respect to the first branch, we have given us a definition of what sin is—"Sin is the transgression of the law." It is to be observed there is a difference between sin and transgression. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but every transgression of the law is not necessarily a sin. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. Now mark the difference. It is possible for a man to transgress the law of God, not knowingly, and then in inspired language we are told that "sin is not imputed unto him." Yet for all that, the penalty will follow whenever a man transgresses, but the chastisement which belongs to sin, to known willful transgression, will not follow.

Let us take a case in the Old Testament, which it may be as well to explain, because sometimes there is a difficulty felt in it. We read of the patriarchs and saints in the Old Testament as living in polygamy. There was no distinct law forbidding it, but there was a law written in the "fleshly tables of the heart," against which it is impossible to trans gress without incurring a penalty. Accordingly, though we never find that the patriarchs are blamed for the moral fault, though you never find them spoken of as having broken the written law of God, yet you see they reaped the penalty that ever must be reaped—in the case of one, degradation: in the case of the other, slavery. Jacob's many wives brought dissension and misery into his household, though he did it innocently and ignorantly, and he reaped the penalty—quarrels and wretchedness. In all this there is penalty, but there is not sin in all this, and therefore there was not excited that agony which comes from the pangs of conscience after willful sin.

Every misery that falls on man has been the consequence of transgression, his own trespass or those of others. It may have been his parents, his grandparents, or his far-back ancestors, who have given him the disadvantages under which he labors. How shall we explain the fact that misery falls alike on the good and on the evil? Only by remembering whether it comes as the penalty of transgression ignorantly done: then it is but the gentle discipline of a Father's love, educating His child, it may be warning the child and giving him the knowledge of that law of which he was hitherto ignorant. This wretchedness of the patriarchs, what was it but the corrective dispensation by which the world learnt that polygamy is against the law of God? So the child who cuts his hand with the sharp blade of the knife has learnt a lesson concerning his need of caution for the future, and if well and bravely borne, he is the better for it; but if there has been added to that transgression the sin of disobedience to his parent's command, then there is something inflicted beyond the penalty; there is all that anguish of conscience and remorse which comes as the consequence of sin. Now we have seen what transgression is, let us try and understand what sin is.

My Christian brethren, it is possible for us to mistake this subject by taking figurative expressions too literally. We speak of sin as if it were a thing, as if we were endowed with it, like memory, or judgment, or imagination, as a faculty which must be exercised. Now let us learn the truth of what sin is—it "is the transgression of the law." There must be some voluntary act, transgressing some known law, or there is no sin. There were those in the days of St. John who held that sin was merely the infirmity of the flesh; that if a man committed sin, and he was to know that it was the working merely of his lower nature, not of his own mind—his faith would save him.

Another error was that of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus; and their error was precisely opposite. "Yes," said the Pharisees, "sin is the transgression of the law. Holiness is conformity to the law, and the lives of the Pharisees being conformable to the ceremonial law, we stand before the world as, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." The Redeemer comes, and He gives another exposition of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law," but there is a law written for the heart, as well as for the outward man. There is a work to be done within as well as without. A murder may be committed by indulging revenge and malice, though the hand has never been lifted to strike. It is not the outward act that constitutes alone the morality of Christ, it is the feeling of the heart, the acts of the inner man.

But then there is another error from which we have to guard ourselves. It is a sophistry in which some men indulge themselves. They say, "Well, if the thought is as bad as the act, why should we not therefore do the act? I am as guilty as if I had committed transgression; why should I debar myself from the enjoyment?" It is, I say, but sophistry, for no man that has any conscience can really so deceive himself. The Redeemer's doctrine was that many a man whose outward life was pure and spotless would have done the transgression if he had had the opportunity. It is one thing to say that he would have done it if he could, but it is quite another thing to say that a man who has indulged the thought, and has drawn back, is as guilty as if he had actually carried out the evil act. The difference lies in this—the one would have done it if he could, and the other could and would not.

We read in the Bible of two men who exemplify this. They both resolved to commit murder, and the opportunity was given to each. Saul threw his javelin with right good will at David's person; he did all that resolution could do, it was but what is called accident that left the javelin quivering in the wall. Opportunity was given also to David. He had resolved to slay Saul, but when the tempting opportunity came, when he was bending over Saul, full of the thought of destroying his enemy, at the very last moment he paused—his conscience smote him—he refused to strike. Which of these was the murderer? Saul was the murderer: he had slain in his heart. It was but an accident that prevented it. In the other case there had been the indulgence of a wrong thought, but it was subdued. He might say, he might as well have slain his foe, but would you say that he was in the same position as a murderer? No, Christian brethren, let there be no sophistry of this kind among us. It is but a subtle whisper from our great adversary that would beguile us. Generally there is first a rising of an inclination which is often no sin. This passes on to a guilty resolve—one step more, and the man has committed the sin.

Now let us turn to the character of our blessed Redeemer, and we shall find him doubly free from all this—as free in desire as free in act The proof of his perfect purity is to be found in the testimony of His enemies, of His friends, and of those indifferent to Him. We have first the evidence of His enemies. For three long years the Pharisees were watching their victim. There was the Pharisee mingling in every crowd, hiding behind every tree. They examined His disciples ; they cross-questioned all around Him ; they looked into His ministerial life, into His domestic privacy, into His hours of retirement. They came forward with the sole accusation that they could muster—that He had shown disrespect to the Roman governor. The Roman judge, who at least should know, had pronounced the accusation null and void. There was another spy. It was Judas. If there had been one act of sin, one failing in all the Redeemer's career that betrayed ambition, that betrayed any desire to aggrandize Himself—in his hour of terrible remorse Judas would have remembered it for his own comfort; but the bitterness of his feelings—that which made life insufferable—was that he had " betrayed innocent blood."

Pass we on to those who were indifferent. And first we have the opinion of Pilate himself. Contemporary historians tell us that Pilate was an austere and cruel man, a man of firm resolve, and one who shrank not from the destruction of human life; but we see here that for once the cruel man became merciful: for once the man of resolve became timid. It was not merely that he thought Jesus was innocent; the hard Roman mind would have cared little for the sacrifice of an obscure Jew. The soul of Pilate was pervaded with the feeling that spotless innocence stood before him, and this feeling extended even to Pilate's wife : for we find that she sent to him and said, " Have thou nothing to do with that just man." It was not because he was going to pass an unjust sentence—he had often done so before—but she felt that here was an innocent one who must not be condemned.

Now let us consider the testimony of His friends. They tell us that during their intercourse of three years His was a life unsullied by a single spot : and I pray you to remember that tells us something of the holiness of the thirty previous years; for no man springs from sin into perfect right eousness at once. If there has been any early wrong-doing—though a man may be changed—yet there is something left that tells of his early character—a want of refinement, of delicacy, of purity; a tarnish has passed upon the brightness, and can not be rubbed off. If we turn to the testimony of John the Baptist, His contemporary, about the same age, one who knew Him not at first as the Messiah: yet when the Son of Man comes to him simply as a man, and asks him to baptize Him, John turns away in astonishment, shocked at the idea. "I have need to be baptized of thee: and comest thou to me?" In other words, the purest and the most austere man that could be found on earth was compelled to acknowledge that in Him who came for baptism there was neither stain nor spot that the water of Jordan was needed to wash away. So we see there was no actual transgression in our blessed Lord.

Now let us see what the inward life was; for it is very possible that there may be no outward transgression, and yet that the heart may not be pure. It is possible that outwardly all may seem right, through absence of temptation, and yet there may be the want of inward perfection. Of the perfection of Jesus we can have but one testimony; it can not be that of the apostles, for the lesser can not judge the greater, and therefore we turn to Himself. He said, "Which of you can charge me with sin?" "I and my Father are one." Now we must remember that just in proportion as a man becomes more holy does he feel and acknowledge the evil that is in him. Thus it was with the Apostle Paul; he declared, "I am the chief of sinners." But here is One who attained the highest point of human excellence, who was acknowledged even by His enemies to be blameless, who declares Himself to be sinless.

If, then, the Son of Man were not the promised Redeemer, He, the humblest of mankind, might justly be accused of pride; the purest of mankind would be deemed to be unconscious of the evil that was in Him. He who looked so deeply into the hearts of others is ignorant of His own; the truest of mankind is guilty of the worst of falsehoods; the noblest of mankind guilty of the sin of sins—the belief that He had no sin. Let but the infidel grant us that human nature has never attained to what it attained in the character of Jesus, then we carry him still farther, that even He whom he acknowledges to be the purest of men declared Himself to be spotless, which, if it were false, would at once do away with all the purity which he grants was His. It was not only the outward acts, but the inner life of Jesus which was so pure. His mind regulates every other mind; it moves in perfect harmony with the mind of God. In all the just men that ever lived you will find some peculiarity carried into excess. We note this in the zeal of St. John, in the courage of St. Peter, in the truth-seeking of St. Thomas. It was not so with Jesus: no one department of His human nature ever superseded another: all was harmony there. The one sound which has come down from God in perfect melody, is His life, the entire unbroken music of humanity.

We pass on to our second subject—the power there is in the manifested sinlessness of Jesus to take away the sins of the world. There are two aspects in which we are to consider this: first in reference to man, and secondly in reference to God. Our subject to-day will confine itself to the first; on the other, we simply say this: there is, in the eternal constitution of the heavenly government, that which makes the life and death of Jesus the atonement for the world's sins. Human nature, which fell in Adam, rose again in Christ; in Him it became a different thing altogether in God's sight—redeemed now, hereafter to be perfected.

But we leave this for the present, and consider how the world was purified by the change of its own nature. "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." There are three ways by which this may be done—by faith, by hope, and by love. It is done by faith, for the most degrading thing in the heart of man is the disbelief in the goodness of human nature. We live in evil, and surrounded by evil, until we have almost ceased to believe in greatness of mind or character. The more a man increases in knowledge of the world, the more does he suspect human nature; a knowing man, according to worldly phraseology, is one that will trust no one. He knows that he himself has his price, and he believes that he can buy any one else: and this may be called the second fall of man—that moment when all our boyish belief in goodness passes away; when such degradation and anguish of soul comes on, that we cease to believe in woman's purity or in man's integrity; when a man has fallen so low there is nothing in this world that can raise him, except faith in the perfect innocence of Jesus. Then it is that there bursts upon the world—that of which the world never dreamed—entire and perfect purity, spotless integrity—no mere dreaming of philosophers and sages—though the dream were a blessed thing to have; the tangible living Being before us, whom we can see, and touch, and hear, so that a man is able to come to his brother with trust in elevated humanity and to say, "This is He of whom the prophets did write."

But secondly, trust in Divine humanity elevates the soul by hope. You must have observed the hopefulness of the character of Jesus—his hopefulness for human nature. If ever there were one who might have despaired, it was He. Full of love Himself, He was met with every sort of unkindness, every kind of derision. There was treachery in one of His disciples, dissension amongst them all. He was engaged in the hardest work that man ever tried. He was met by the hatred of the whole world, by torture and the cross; and yet never did the hope of human nature forsake the Redeemer's soul. He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. There was a spark mingling even in the lowest humanity, which He would fain have fanned into a blaze. The lowest publican Jesus could call to Him and touch his heart; the lowest profligate that was ever trodden under foot by the world was one for whom He could hope still. If He met with penitents, He would welcome them; if they were not penitents, but yet felt the pangs of detected guilt, still with hopefulness He pointed to forgiven humanity: this was His word, even to the woman brought to Him by her accusers, "Go, and sin no more;" in His last moments on the cross, to one who was dying by His side, He promised a place in Paradise: and the last words that broke from the Redeemer's lips—what were they but hope for our humanity, while the curses were ringing in His ears?—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now it is this hopefulness that raises hope in us. Christian brethren, we dare to hope for that nature which Jesus loved, we dare to forgive that nature which Jesus condescended to wear. This frail, evil, weak humanity of ours, these hearts that yield to almost every gust of temptation, the Son of Man hoped for them.

And thirdly, it is done also by love; hate narrows the heart, love expands the heart. To hate is to be miserable; to love is to be happy. To love is to have almost the power of throwing aside sin. See the power of love in the hearts of those around Him. He comes to a desponding man, nourishing dark thoughts of the world; He speaks encouragingly, and the language of that man is, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He goes to a man who had loved money all his life. He treats him as a man, and the man's heart is conquered: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." He comes to the coward, who had denied Him, and asks him simply, "Lovest thou Me?" and the coward becomes a martyr, and dares to *ask* to be crucified. He comes to a sinful woman, who had spent large sums on the adornment of her person, and the ointment which was intended for herself was poured in love upon His feet, mingling with her tears. "She loved much," and much was forgiven.

And it was not during the Redeemer's life alone that the power of His love extended. It was manifested also after His death. There was the healing act done on the man who asked for alms. For this the apostles were carried before the Sadducees, and the man on whom this miracle was done stood by them, full of strength and courage. The day before he had been a miserable, cringing suppliant, beseeching pity from the passers-by. But all the wailing tone is gone; the attitude of the suppliant has passed away, and the renovated cripple fronts the supreme judicature of Israel with a lion heart. Ask you what has inspired and dignified that man, and raised him higher in the scale of humanity? It was the power of love. It is not so much the manifestation of this doctrine or that doctrine, that can separate the soul from sin. It is not the law. It is not by pressing on the lower nature to restrain it, that this can be done, but it is by elevating it. He speaks not to the degraded of the sinfulness of sin, but He dwells upon the love of the Father, upon His tender mercies; and if a man would separate himself from the bondage of guilt, there is no other way than this. My Christian brethren, forget that miserable past life of yours, and look up to the streams of mercy ever flowing from the right hand of God.

My brethren, it is on this principle that we desire to preach to the heathen. We would preach neither high Church nor low Church doctrine. We desire to give Jesus Christ to the world; and in pleading for this Society* I will not endeavor to excite your sympathies by drawing a picture of the heathen world suspended over unutterable misery, and dropping minute by minute into everlasting wretchedness. It is easy to do this; and then to go away calmly and quietly to our comfortable meals and our handsome habitations, satisfied with having demonstrated so tremendous a fact. But this we say, if we would separate the world from sin, and from the penalty of sin, and the inward misery of the heart attendant on sin in this world and the world to come, it is written in Scripture, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," than the name of Jesus.

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* Church Missionary Society.

X.

CHRIST'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SIN.

"And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."—Mark ii. 8–11.

This anecdote is doubtless a familiar one to us all.

The Son of God was teaching in a house full of listeners, round which crowds were pressing. The friends of a poor palsied man desired His aid. It was scarcely possible for one person to edge his way through the press, where all longed to hear, and none of the crowd were likely to give place; but, for the cumbrous apparatus of a pallet borne by four, it was impossible. Therefore they ascended by the outside staircase, which, in Oriental countries leads to the flat roof, which they broke up, and let their friend down in the midst, before Jesus. No doubt this must have struck every one. But the impression produced on the spectators would probably have been very different from that produced on Christ. They that saw the bed descending from the roof over the heads of all, and who had before seen the fruitless efforts that had been made to get in, and now remembered that he who had been farthest from Christ was unexpectedly in a few minutes nearest to Him, could not have withheld that applause which follows a successful piece of dexterity. They would have admired the perseverance, or the ingenuity, or the inventiveness.

On none of these qualities did Christ fix as an explanation of the fact. He went deeper. He traced it to the deepest source of power that exists in the mind of man. "When Jesus saw their *faith.*" For as love is deepest in the being of God, so faith is the mightiest principle in the soul of man. Let us distinguish their several essences. Love is the essence of the Deity—that which makes it Deity. Faith is the essence of humanity, which constitutes it what it is. And, as here, it is the warring principle of this world which wins in life's battle. No wonder that it is written in Scrip ture—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." No wonder it is said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." It is that which wrestles with difficulty, removes mountains, tramples upon impossibilities. It is this spirit which in the common affairs of life, known as a "sanguine temperament," never says "impossible" and never believes in failure, leads the men of the world to their most signal successes, making them believe a thing possible because they hope it; and giving substantial reality to that which before was a shadow and a dream.

It was this "substance of things hoped for" that gave America to Columbus, when billows, miles deep, rose between him and the land, and the men he commanded well-nigh rose in rebellion against the obstinacy which believed in "things not yet seen." It was this that crowned the Mohammedan arms for seven centuries with victory: so long as they believed themselves the champions of the One God with a mission from Him, they were invincible. And it is this which so often obtains for some new system of medicine the honor of a cure, when the real cause of cure is only the patient's trust in the remedies.

So it is in religion. For faith is not something heard of in theology alone, created by Christianity, but it is one of the commonest principles of life. He that believes a blessing is to be got, that "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," will venture much, and will likewise win much. For, as with this palsied man, faith is inventive, ever fertile in expedients—like our own English character, never knowing when it has been foiled; and then nearest victory at the very moment when the last chance has seemed to fail. We divide our subject into—

I. The malady presented to Christ.
II. His treatment of it.

I. The malady, apparently, was nothing more than palsy. But not as such did Jesus treat it. The by-standers might have been surprised at the first accost of Jesus to the paralytic man. It was not, "Take up thy bed and walk;" but "Thy sins be forgiven thee." As with their faith, so it was here. He went deeper than perseverance or ingenuity. He goes deeper than the outward evil; down to *the* evil, the root of all evil, properly the only evil—sin. He read in that sufferer's heart a deeper wish than appeared in the outward act, the consequences of a burden worse than palsy, the longing for a rest more profound than release from pain—the desire to be healed of guilt. It was in reply to this tacit application that the words "Thy sins be forgiven thee" were spoken.

Now, sin has a twofold set of consequences. 1. The natural consequences. 2. The moral consequences.

1. By the natural, we mean those results which come inevitably in the train of wrong-doing, by what we call the laws of nature visiting themselves on the outward condition of a sinner, by which sin and suffering are linked together. As for example, when an intemperate man ruins his health, or an extravagant man leaves himself broken in fortune; or when tyrannical laws bring an uprising of a people against a tyrant: these are respectively the natural penalties of wrong-doing.

Here, apparently, palsy had been the natural result of sin; for otherwise the address of Christ was out of place and meaningless. And what we are concerned to remark is, that these natural consequences of sin are often invisible as well as inevitable. Probably not one of the four friends who bore him suspected such a connection. Possibly not even his physician. But there were two at least to whom the connection was certain—the conscience of the palsied man himself, whose awakened memory traced back the trembling of those limbs to the acts of a youth long past; and to the all-seeing eye of Him to whom past, present, and future are but one.

And such experience, brethren, is true, doubtless, much oftener than we imagine. The irritable temperament, the lost memory which men bewail, the over-sensitive brain, as if causeless—who can tell how they stand connected with sins done long ago? For nothing here stands alone and causeless. Every man, with his strength and his weaknesses, stunted in body or dwarfed in heart, palsied in nerve or deadened in sensibility, is the exact result and aggregate of all the past—all that has been done by himself, and all that has been done by his ancestors, remote or near. The Saviour saw in this palsied man the miserable wreck of an ill-spent life.

2. Now quite distinct from these are the moral consequences of guilt: by which I mean those which tell upon the character and inward being of the man who sins. In one sense, no doubt, it is a *natural* result, inasmuch as it is by a law, regular and unalterable, a man becomes by sin deteriorated in character, or miserable. Now these are twofold, negative and positive—the loss of some blessing, or the accruing of some evil to the heart. Loss—as when by sinning we lose the capacity for all higher enjoyments; for

none can sin without blunting his sensibilities. He has lost the zest of a pure life, the freshness and the flood of happiness which come to every soul when it is delicate, and pure, and natural. This is no light loss. If any one here congratulates himself that sin has brought to him no positive misery, my brother, I pray you to remember that God's worst curse was pronounced upon the serpent tempter. Apparently it was far less than that pronounced on the woman, but really it was far more terrible. Not pain, not shame—no, these are remedial, and may bring penitence at last—but to sink the angel in the animal, the spirit in the flesh; to be a reptile, and to eat the dust of degradation as if it were natural food. Eternity has no damnation deeper than that.

Then, again, a positive result—the dark and dreadful loneliness that comes from doing wrong — a conscious unrest which plunges into business, or pleasure, or society, not for the love of these things, but to hide itself from itself as Adam did in the trees of the garden, because it dare not hear the voice of God, nor believe in His Presence. Do we not know something of a self-reproach and self-contempt, which, alternating at times with pride, almost tear the soul asunder? And such was the state of this man. His pains were but the counterpart and reflection of a deeper sorrow. Pain had laid him on a bed, and said to him, "Lie there face to face with God—and think!" We pass on now to consider—

II. Christ's treatment of that malady.

By the declaration of God's forgiveness. Brethren, if the Gospel of our Master mean any thing it means this—the blotting out of sin: "To declare His righteousness in the remission of sins that are past." It is the declaration of the highest name of God—love. Let us understand what forgiveness is. The forgiveness of God acts upon the moral consequences of sin directly and immediately; on the natural, mediately and indirectly.

Upon the moral consequences directly. Remorse passes into penitence and love. There is no more loneliness, for God has taken up His abode there. No more self-contempt, for he whom God has forgiven learns to forgive himself. There is no more unrest, for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Then the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and unwonted happy tears can come—as with the woman in the Gospels. I pray you to observe that this comes directly, with no interval—"Being justified by faith." For God's love is not an offer but a gift; not clogged with conditions, but free as the air we breathe.

Upon the natural consequences, not directly, but indirectly and mediately. The forgiveness of Christ did not remove the palsy; that was the result of a separate, distinct act of Christ. It is quite conceivable that it might never have been removed at all—that he might have been forgiven, and the palsy suffered to remain. God might have dealt with him as He did in David's case: on his repentance there came to him the declaration of God's pardon, his person was accepted, the moral consequences were removed, but the natural consequences remained. "The Lord hath put away thy sin, nevertheless the child which is born to thee shall die."

Consider, too, that without a miracle they *must* have remained in this man's case. It is so in everyday life. If the intemperate man repents he will receive forgiveness, but will that penitence give him back the steady hand of youth? Or if the suicide between the moment of draining the poisoned cup and that of death repent of his deed, will that arrest the operation of the poison? A strong constitution or the physician may possibly save life; but penitence has nothing to do with it. Say that the natural penal consequence of crime is the scaffold: Did the pardon given to the dying thief unnail his hands? Did Christ's forgiveness interfere with the natural consequences of his guilt?

And thus, we are brought to a very solemn and awful consideration, awful because of its truth and simplicity. The consequences of past deeds remain. They have become part of the chain of the universe—effects which now are causes, and will work and interweave themselves with the history of the world forever. You can not undo your acts. If you have depraved another's will, and injured another's soul, it may be in the grace of God that hereafter you will be personally accepted and the consequences of your guilt inwardly done away, but your penitence can not undo the evil you have done, and God's worst punishment may be that you may have to gaze half frantic on the ruin you have caused, on the evil you have done, which you might have left undone, but which being done is now beyond your power forever. This is the eternity of human acts. The forgiveness of God—the blood of Christ itself—does not undo the past.

And yet even here the grace of God's forgiveness is not in vain. It can not undo the natural consequences of sin, but it may by His mercy transform them into blessings. For example, suppose this man's palsy to have been left still with him, himself accepted, his soul at peace. Well, he is thenceforth a crippled man. But crippling, pain—are these necessarily evils? Do we not say continually that sorrow and pain are God's loving discipline given to His legitimate children, to be exempt from which were no blessing, proving them to be "bastards and not sons?" And why should not that palsy be such to him, though it was the result of his own fault? Once, when it seemed in the light of the guilty conscience only the foretaste of coming doom—the outward a type of the inward, every pang sending him farther from God, it was a curse. Now, when penitence and love had come, and that palsy was received with patience, meekness, why may it not be a blessing? What makes the outward events of life blessings or the reverse? Is it not all from ourselves? Did not dissolution become quite another thing by the Fall—changed into *death;* assuming thereby an entirely altered character: no longer felt as a natural blessed herald, becoming the messenger of God, summoning to higher life, but now obtaining that strange name—the "king of terrors?" And in Christ, death becomes our minister again: "Ours," as St. Paul says, "with all other things." The cross of Christ has restored to death something more blessed than its original peacefulness. A sleep now: not death at all. And will not a changed heart change all things around us, and make the worst consequence of our own misdoing minister to our eternal welfare? So that God's forgiveness, assured to us in the cross of Christ, is a complete remedy for sin, acting on its natural consequences by transformation indirectly; on its moral results directly, by removing them.

Lastly, let us learn from this the true aim and meaning of miracles. Let us attend to the account our Master gives us of the reason why He performed this miracle. Read verses 9, 10. To say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," was easy, for no visible result could test the saying. To say, "Take up thy bed and walk," was not apparently so easy, for failure would cover with confusion. He said the last, leaving the inference—If I can do the most difficult, then of course, I can do the easier. Here we have the true character of a miracle: it is the outward manifestation of the power of God, in order that we may believe in the power of God in things that are invisible.

Now contrast this with the popular view. Miracles are commonly reckoned as proofs of Christ's mission, accrediting His other truths, and making them, which would be otherwise incredible, evidently from God. I hesitate not to say that nowhere in the New Testament are they spoken of in this way. When the Pharisees asked for evidences and signs, His reply was, "There shall no sign be given you." So said St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians—not signs, but "Christ crucified." He had no conception of our modern notion of miracles—things chiefly valuable because they can be collected into a portable volume of evidences to prove that God is love: that we should love one another: that He is the Father of all men. These need no proofs, they are like the sun shining by his own light.

Christ's glorious miracles were not to prove these, but that through the seen the unseen might be known; to show, as it were by specimens, the living Power which works in ordinary as well as extraordinary cases. For instance here, to show that the One who is *seen* to say with power, "Take up thy bed and walk," arresting the natural consequences of sin, is actually, though unseen, arresting its moral consequences. Or again, that He who bade the waves "Be still" in Galilee, is holding now, at this moment, the winds in the hollow of His hand. That He who healed the sick and raised the dead, holds now and ever in His hand the issues of life and death. For the marvellous is to show the source of the common. Miracles were no concession to that infidel spirit which taints our modern Christianity, and which can not believe in God's presence, except it can see Him in the supernatural. Rather, they were to make us feel that all is marvellous, all wonderful, all pervaded with a Divine presence, and that the simplest occurrences of life are miracles.

In conclusion. Let me address those who, like this sufferer, are in any degree conscious either of the natural or moral results of sin, working in them. It is apparently a proud and a vain thing for a minister of Christ, himself tainted with sin, feeling himself, perhaps more than any one else can feel, the misery of a palsied heart, for such a one to give advice to his brother-men; but it must be done, for he is but the mouthpiece of truths greater than himself, truths which are facts, whether he can feel them all or not.

Therefore, if there be one among us who in the central depths of his soul is conscious of a Voice pronouncing the past accursed, the present awful, and the future terrible—I say to him, Lose no time in disputing, as these Scribes did, some Church question, "whether the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" nor whether ecclesiastical etiquette permits you to approach God in this way or in that way—a question as impertinent as it would have been for the palsied man to debate whether social propriety permitted him to approach the Saviour as he did, instead of through the door.

My Christian brethren, if the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and God succeed in keeping you away, all is lost. Right into the Presence you must force your way, with no concealment, baring the soul with all its ailments before Him, asking, not the arrest of the consequences of sin, but the "cleansing of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" so that if you must suffer you shall suffer as a forgiven man.

This is the time! Wait not for another opportunity nor for different means. For the saying of our Lord is ever fulfilled, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

XI.

REGENERATION.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."—John iii. 5–7.

The Church of England has apparently selected this passage for the Gospel of Trinity Sunday, because the influences of the entire Godhead are named in different verses—the regenerating influence of the Spirit, the limitations of the Son of Man, and the illimitable nature of the Father.

It is a threefold way in which God has revealed Himself to man—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. First, as a Father in opposition to that doctrine which taught that the whole universe is God, and every part of the universe is a portion of God. He is the Father who hath made this universe—God distinct from us: outside of us: the Creator distinguished from the creation.

Secondly, God has revealed Himself as a Son, as manifested in humanity, chiefly in Christ. Throughout the ages past there has been a mediatorial humanity. Man is in a way the reflection of God's nature—the father to the child. The prophets, the lawgivers, and especially Moses, are called mediators, through whom God's name was known. The mediatorial system culminated in Christ, attained the acme of perfection in One—the man Christ Jesus—the express image of His Father. The Son is the human side of the mind of God.

Thirdly, God has revealed himself as the Holy Spirit: not as a Father external to us, nor as reflected in humanity still outside us, but as God within us mingling with our being. The body of man is His temple. "In Him we live and move, and have our being." This is the dispensation of the Spirit: He has told us that every holy aspiration, every thought and act, that has been on the side of right against wrong, is a part of His holy essence, of His Spirit in us.

This is the threefold manifestation made of Himself to us by God. But this is not all, for this alone would not be the doctrine of the Trinity. It is quite conceivable that there might be one living force manifested in three different ways, without its being a trinity. Let us try and understand this by an illustration.

Conceive a circular thin plate of metal: above it you would see it such; at some yards' distance, as an oval, sideways, edgeways, a line. This might be the account of God's different aspects: in one relationship to us seen as the Father, in another as the Son, in another as the Spirit; but this is not the doctrine of the Trinity, it is a heresy, known in old times by the name of Sabellianism or modal Trinity, depending on our position in reference to Him.

Further. This is not merely the same *part* of His nature, seen in different aspects, but diverse parts of His complex being—persons: three causes of this manifestation. Just as our reason, our memory, our imagination, are not the same, but really ourselves.

Let us take another illustration. A single white ray of light, falling on a certain object, appears red; on another, blue; on another, yellow. That is, the red alone in one case is thrown out, the blue or yellow in another. So the different parts of the one ray by turns become visible; each is a complete ray, yet the original white ray is but one.

So we believe that in that Unity of Essence there are three living Powers which we call Persons, distinct from each other. It is in virtue of His own incommunicable Essence that God is the Father. It is the human side of His nature by which He is revealed as the Son, so that it was not, so to speak, a matter of choice whether the Son or the Father should redeem the world. We believe that from all eternity there was that in the mind of God which I have called its human side, which made it possible for Him to be imaged in humanity; and that again named the Spirit, by which He could mix and mingle Himself with us.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity, explained now, not to point the damnatory clause of the Athanasian creed, but only in order to seize joyfully the annual opportunity of professing a firm belief in the dogmatic truth of the Trinity

We now pass on to notice more particularly the revelation to us of one mode in which that blessed Trinity works. This will divide itself into two subjects. First, we shall endeavor to understand what is meant by the kingdom of God; and secondly, we shall consider the entrance into that kingdom by regeneration.

Our blessed Lord says, "Except a man be born again, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." Now that expression—the kingdom of God—is a Jewish one. Nicodemus was a Jew; and we must therefore endeavor to comprehend how he would understand it.

By the kingdom of God, a Jew understood human society perfected—that domain on earth where God was visible and God ruled. The whole Jewish dispensation had trained Nicodemus to realize this. The Jewish kingdom was a theocracy, distinguished from an aristocracy and a democracy. There were two main things observable in this. First, it was a kingdom in which God's power was manifestly visible by miracles, marvels, the cloud and fire pillars, and by appearances direct from the King of kings. The second matter of importance in this conception of the Divine kingdom was that it was a society in which a person ruled. God was the ruler of this society; her laws all dated from God's will, and were right because the will of the Ruler was right. "Thus saith the Lord," was the preface to personal messages from their King.

Bear in mind, then, that this was Nicodemus's conception of the kingdom, and we shall understand the conversation. He had seen in the works of Christ the assertion of a living Will ruling over the laws of nature. He had seen wonders and signs. Therefore he said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God:" he saw that Christ in these two senses fulfilled the two requisites of a Divine mission. He had seen a society growing up in acknowledgment of the rule of a person: but Christ told him that something more was needful than this: it was necessary that the subject should be prepared for the kingdom. It was not enough that God should draw nigh to man; but that man must draw near to God. There must be an alteration in the man. "Except a man be born again he can not enter the kingdom of God."

In other words, he distinguished between a kingdom that is visible and a kingdom that is invisible. He distinguished between that presence of God which man can see, and that which man can only feel. This will explain apparent contradictions in Christ's language.

To the Pharisee, on one occasion, He said, "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you." But again He said, "It is not lo here, nor lo there. For the kingdom of God is within you." There is a kingdom, therefore, in which the Eternal Spirit moves, whereof the senses take cognizance. Nicodemus saw that kingdom when he gazed on the miracles and outward signs, and felt that they were evidences, and from these and from the gathering society around the Lord, drew the conclusion that no man could do these things except God were with him.

There was the outward manifestation. But there is another kingdom which is the peculiar domain of the Spirit, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," into which flesh and blood can not enter. Of this kingdom Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it." And of this St. Paul said, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God."

Unless an inward change takes place, though surrounded by God's kingdom, we can not enter into it. The eye, the ear, can take no cognizance of this; it must be revealed by the Spirit to the spirit.

Pass we on, secondly, to consider the entrance into this kingdom by regeneration. As there is a twofold kingdom, so is there a twofold entrance.

1. By the baptism of water. 2. By the baptism of the Spirit. Now respecting the first of these, commentators have been greatly at variance. A large number of Protestant commentators have endeavored to explain this passage away, as if it did not apply to baptism at all. But by all the laws of correct interpretation, we are compelled to admit that "born of water" has here a reference to baptism.

Into God's universe or kingdom we penetrate by a double nature—by our senses and by our spirit. To this double nature God has made a twofold revelation. God's witness to our senses is baptism; God's witness to our spirit is His Spirit. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." Now let us observe the strength of that expression of Christ, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of God." A very strong expression, but not more so than the baptismal service of the Church of England. "Born of water" is equivalent to regeneration by baptism.

There are those who object to this formulary of our Church because it seems to them to tell of a magical or miraculous power in the hands of the priest. In answer to them, we point to this passage of the inspired Word of God: let us try and understand in what sense it is true that a man is born of water. Now we hold baptism to be the sign, or proof, or evidence, of a spiritual fact. It is not the fact, but it substantiates the fact.

The spiritual fact is God's covenant. Let us take an illustration. The right of a man to his property is in right of his ancestor's will; it is in virtue of that will or intention that the man inherits that property. But because that will is invisible, it is necessary that it should be made manifest in visible symbols; and therefore there is a piece of parchment by which it is made tangible, and that, though only the manifestation of the will, is called "the will" itself. Nay, so strongly is this word with its associations rooted in our language, that it may never have occurred to us that it is but a figurative expression; and the law might, if it had been so chosen, have demanded another expression of the will.

There have been cases in which a high-minded heir-at-law has accepted the verbal testimony of another to the intentions of his ancestor, where there has been no outward manifestation whatever, and so has given away the property because the inward will of his ancestor, was to him all in all.

Similarly, baptism is the revealed will of God: that is, it is the instrument that declares God's will. God's will is a thing invisible; verbally, the will runs thus—"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

And just as the instrument which declares a will is called by a figure of speech "the will" itself, although it is but the manifestation of it, so the ecclesiastical instrument which declares regeneration is called regeneration in the Bible and in our Church service. Baptism is "regeneration" as a parchment is a "will;" and, therefore it is that we read in this passage, "Born of water;" and therefore it is that St. Peter says, "Baptism saves us;" and St. Paul says, "Buried with Christ in baptism."

Lastly, we pass on to consider the entrance into this kingdom by a spiritual change.

The ground on which Christ states it is our human nature. We have a twofold nature—the nature of the animal and the nature of God, and in the order of God's providence we begin with the animal. "Howbeit," says St. Paul, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Now the moment when these natures are exchanged is the moment of spiritual regeneration.

A man is to be born of water, but far rather of the Spirit. Of this expression there are several interpretations: first, the fanatical one. Men of enthusiastic temperaments, chiefly men whose lives have been irregular, whose religion has come to them suddenly, interpreting all cases by their own experiences, have said that the exercise of God's Spirit is ever sudden and supernatural, and it has seemed to them that to try and bring up a child for God, in the way of education, is to bid defiance to that Spirit which is like the wind, blowing "where it listeth;" and if a man can not tell the day or hour when he was converted, to those persons he does not seem to be a Christian at all. He may be holy, humble, loving, but unless there is that visible manifestation of how and when he was changed, he must be still ranked as unregenerate.

Another class of persons, of cold, calm temperament, to whom fanaticism is a crime and enthusiasm a thing to be avoided, are perpetually rationalizing with Scripture, and explaining away in some low and commonplace way the highest manifestation of the Spirit of God. Thus Paley tells us that this passage belongs to the Jews, who had forgotten the Messiah's kingdom; but to speak of a spiritual, regenerative change as necessary for a man brought up in the Church of England, is to open the door to all fanaticism.

There is a third class, who confound the regeneration of baptism with that of the Spirit, who identify, in point of time, the being born of water and of the Spirit. And it seems to them that regeneration after that is a word without meaning. Of this class there are two divisions: those who hold it openly in the Church of Rome, and those who do not go to the full extent of Romish doctrine on this subject. These will not say that a miracle has taken place, but they say that a seed of grace has thus been planted. Whichever of these views be taken, for all practical purposes the result must be the same. If this inward spiritual change has taken place at baptism, then to talk of regeneration *after* that must be an impertinence. But, brethren, looking at this passage, we can not be persuaded that it belongs to the Jew alone, nor can we believe that the strength of that expression is mere baptism by water. Here is recorded that which is true not for the Jew or heathen only, but for all the human race, without exception. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God."

In our life there is a time in which our spirit has gained the mastery over the flesh; it is not important to know when, but whether it has taken place.

The first years of our existence are simply animal; then the life of a young man is not that of mere instinct, it is a life of passion, with mighty indignations, strong aversions. And then passing on through life we sometimes see a person in whom these things are merged; the instincts are there only for the support of existence; the passions are so ruled that they have become gentleness, and meekness, and love. Between these two extremes there must have been a middle point, when the life of sense, appetite, and passion, which *had* ruled, ceased to rule, and was ruled over by the life of the spirit: that moment, whether it be long or short, whether it be done suddenly or gradually, whether it come like the rushing mighty wind, or as the slow, gentle zephyr of the spring—whenever that moment was, then was the moment of spiritual regeneration. There are cases in which this never takes place at all; there are grown men and old men merely children still—still having the animal appetites, and living in the base, and conscious, and vicious indulgence of those appetites which in the child were harmless. These are they who have not yet been born again. Born of water they may have been, born of God's eternal Spirit they have not been; before such men can enter into the eternal kingdom of their Father, that word is as true to them as to Nicodemus of old, "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." Oh! it is an awful thing to see a spectacle such as that; an awful thing to see the blossom still upon the tree when the autumn is passed and the winter is at hand. An awful thing to see a man, who ought to be clothed in Christ, still living the life of the flesh and of passion: the summer is past, the harvest is ended, and he is not saved.

Now let us briefly apply what has been said.

1. Do not attempt to date too accurately the transition moment.

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2. Understand that the "flesh," or natural state, is wrong only when out of place. In its place it is imperfection, not evil. There is no harm in leaves or blossoms in spring—but in autumn! There is no harm in the appetites of childhood, or the passions of youth, but great harm when these are still unsubdued in age. Observe, therefore, the flesh is not to be exercised, but the spirit strengthened. This I say then, "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

3. Do not mistake the figurative for the literal.

Baptism is regeneration figuratively: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

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The things to be anxious about are not baptism, not confirmation; but the spiritual facts for which baptism and confirmation stand.

XII.

AN ELECTION SERMON.

A FRAGMENT.

"And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."—Acts i. 23–26.

This is the account of the earliest appointment of an apostle or bishop over the Church of Christ.

It stands remarkably distinguished from the episcopal elections of after ages. Every one acquainted with Church history knows that the election of a bishop in the first centuries, and indeed for many ages, was one of the bitterest and fiercest questions which shook the Church of Christ.

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[Appointment by the people—Presbyters—Various customs. Anecdote of Ambrose of Milan. Appointment by the Emperor or Bishop of Rome. Quarrel of ages between the Emperor and the Pope.]

Contradistinguished from this in spirit was the first appointment which ended in the selection of Matthias. Holy, calm, wise—presided over by an apostolic and Christian spirit.

It will be obvious at once why this subject has been selected. During the course of this week, England will be shaken to her centre with the selection of representatives who shall legislate for her hereafter, either in accordance with, or in defiance of, the principles of her constitution. In some places, as fiercely as the battle was formerly carried on between Guelph and Ghibelline, or between faction and faction in the choice of bishops, so fiercely will the contest rage in the choice of representatives.

Delicate and difficult as the introduction of such a subject from the pulpit must be, yet it seems to me the imperative duty of a minister of Christ—from which he cannot, except in cowardice, shrink—to endeavor to make clear the great Christian landmarks which belong to such an occurrence. But let me be understood. His duty is not to introduce politics in the common sense of the word, meaning thereby the views of some particular party. The pulpit is not to be degraded into the engine of a faction. Far, far above such questions, it ought to preserve the calm dignity of a voice which speaks for eternity, and not for time. If possible, not one word should drop by which a minister's own political leanings can be discovered.

Yet there must be broad principles of right and wrong in such a transaction, as in any other. And, in discharge of my duty, I desire to place those before you. We shall consider—

I. The object of the election spoken of in my text.
II. The mode of the election.
III. The spirit in which it was conducted.

I. The object of the election. To elect a bishop of the universal Church.

It might be that in process of time the apostle so chosen should be appointed to a particular city—as St. James was to Jerusalem. But it is plain his duty as an apostle was owed to the general assembly and Church of Christ, and not to that particular city; and if he had allowed local partialities or local interests to stand before the interests of the whole, he would have neglected the duty of his high office.

Also, that if those who appointed him considered the interest of Jerusalem in the first instance, instead of his qualifications as a bishop of the Church universal, they would have failed in their duty.

In the third century, a bishop of Carthage, Cyprian, in a celebrated sentence has clearly and beautifully stated this principle—"*Episcopatus unus est, cujus*," etc. The episcopate, one and indivisible, held in its entirety by each bishop, every part standing for the whole. That is, if he were a bishop of Carthage or Antioch, he was to remember that it was not the interests of Carthage over which he had to watch, but those of the Church of Christ; Carthage being his special allotment out of the whole. And in a council he was to give his voice not for that which might be good for the men of Carthage, but for the Church of Christ.

The application is plain.

The nation is one—its life is a sacred life. The nation is the Christian people, for whom Christ shed His blood—its life is unity—its death is division. The curse of a Christian is sectarianism—the curse of a nation is faction. Each legislator legislates for the country, not for a county or town. Each elector holds his franchise as a sacred trust, to be exercised not for his town, or for a faction of his town, not for himself, or his friends, but for the general weal of the people of England.

Let me expose a common fallacy.

We are not to be biased by asking what charity does a candidate support, nor what view does he take of some local question, nor whether he subscribe to tractarian or to evangelical societies. We are, in our high responsibility, selecting, not a president for a religious society, nor a patron of a town, nor a subscriber to a hospital, but a legislator for England.

II. The mode of the election.

It was partly human, partly Divine. The human element is plain enough in that it was popular. The choice lay not with the apostles, but with the whole Church. One hundred and twenty met in that upper chamber: all gave in their lots or votes. The Divine element lay in this, that it was over ruled by God.

Here is the main point observable. They at least took for granted that the popular element was quite separate from the Divine. The selected one might be the chosen of the people, yet not the chosen of God. Hence they prayed, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen."

The common notion is, *vox populi vox Dei.* In other words, whatever the general voice wills is right. A law is right because it is a people's will. I do not say that we have got the full length of this idea in England. On the Continent it has long been prevalent. Possibly it is the expression of that Antichrist "who showeth himself that he is God;" self-will setting itself up paramount to the will of God.

The *vox populi* is sometimes *vox Dei*, sometimes not. The voice of the people was the voice of God when the children of Israel rescued Jonathan from his father's unjust sentence; and when the contest between Elijah and the proph ets of Baal having been settled, they cried, "The Lord He is God."

Was the voice of the people the voice of God when, in Moses's absence, they required Aaron to make them a golden calf for a god? Or when, led on by the demagogue Demetrius, they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians?" Or when, at the instigation of the priests, led blindfold by them they cried, "Crucify Him?"

The politicians of this world eagerly debate the question, how best to secure a fair representation of the people's voice, whether by individuals or by interests fairly balanced?—a question, doubtless, not to be put aside. But the Christian sees a question deeper far than these—not how to obtain most fairly an expression of the people's will, but how that will shall truly represent the will of God. There is no other question at last than this.

And we shall attain this, not by nicely balancing interest against interest, much less by manœuvring or by cunningly devised expedient, to defeat the cause which we believe the wrong one; but by each doing all that in him lies to rouse himself and others to a high sense of responsibility.

It is a noble thought, that of every elector going to vote, as these men did, for the Church, for the people, for God, and for the right, earnestly anxious that he and others should do *right.*

Else—to speak humanly—this was an appeal to chance and not to God; and every election, by ballot or by suffrage, is else an appeal to chance.

All, therefore, depends upon the *spirit* in which the election is conducted.

What constitutes the difference between an appeal to God and an appeal to chance?

III. The Spirit.

1. A *religious* spirit. "They prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen." Now, we shall be met here at once by an objection. This was a religious work—the selection of an apostle; but the choice of a representative is not a religious work, only a secular one.

Here we come, therefore, to the very pith and marrow of the whole question. The distinction between religious and secular is true in a sense, but as we make it, it is false. It is not the occupation, but the spirit which makes the difference. The election of a bishop may be a most secular thing. The election of a representative may be a religious thing St.

Paul taught that nothing is profane. Sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, St. Peter learned that nothing is common or unclean.

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[Many relics remain to us from our religious forefathers indicative of this truth: Grace before meals; *Dei gratia* on coins of the realms; "In the name of God," at the commencement of wills, oaths in court of justice; prayers in universities before election of scholars: all proclaim that the simplest acts of our domestic and political life are sacred or profane according to the spirit in which they are performed; not in the question whether they are done for the State or the Church, but whether with God or without God.]

Observe: it is not the preluding such an election with public prayer that would make it a religious act. It is religious so far as each man discharges his part as a duty and solemn responsibility.

If looked on in this spirit by the higher classes, would the debauchery and the drunkenness which are fostered by rich men of all parties among the poor for their own purposes, be possible? Would they, for the sake of one vote, or a hundred votes, brutalize their fellow-creatures?

2. It is implied in this, that it must be done *conscientiously.*

Each Christian found himself in possession of a new right—that of giving a vote or casting a lot.

Like all rights, it was a duty. He had not a right to do what he liked. His right was only the duty of doing right. And if any one had swayed him to support the cause of Barnabas or that of Matthias on any motives except this one—"You ought"—he had so far injured his conscience.

The conscience of man is a holy, sacred thing. The worst of crimes is to injure a human conscience. Better kill the body. Remember how strongly St. Paul speaks, "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." And that sin, remember, consisted in leading them to do a thing which, though right in itself, they thought wrong.

Now there is an offense against the laws of the State which all men agree in treating with a smile.

My brethren, bribery is a *sin*—a sin against God. Not because a particular law has been made against it, but because it lowers the sense of personal responsibility, blunts the conscience, dethrones the God within the man's soul, and erects selfishness, and greed, and interest, in His stead. And whether you do it directly or indirectly—directly by giving, indirectly by withdrawing, assistance or patronage—you sin against Christ.

3. It was not done from personal interest.

There were two candidates, Barnabas and Matthias. Now if the supporters of these two had been influenced chiefly by such considerations as blood-relationship, or the chance of favor and promotion, manifestly a high function would have been degraded.

In secular matters, however, we do not judge so. A man generally decides according to his professional or his personal interests. You know almost to a certainty beforehand which way a man will vote, if you know his profession. If a man be a farmer, or a clergyman, or a merchant, you can pretty surely guess on which side he will range himself.

Partly, no doubt, this is involuntary—the result of those prejudices which attach to us all from association. But it is partly voluntary. We *know* that we are thinking not of the general good, but of our own interests. And thus a farmer would think himself justified in looking at a question simply as it affected his class, and a noble as it affected his caste, and a working-man as it bore upon the working-classes.

Brethren, we are Christians. Something of a principle higher than this ought to be ours. What is the law of the cross of Christ? The sacrifice of the One for the whole, the cheerful surrender of the few for the many. Else, what do we more than others?

These are fine words—patriotism, public principle, purity. Be sure these words are but sentimental expressions, except as they spring out of the cross of Christ.

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Application.

I have endeavored to keep entirely unseen my own political views. I may have failed, but not voluntarily.

Remember, in conclusion, the matter of paramount importance to be decided this week is, not whether a preponderance shall be insured for one of the great parties which divide the country or the other. That is important, but it is secondary. The important thing to be devoutly wished is, that each man shall give his vote as these men did—conscientiously, religiously, unselfishly, lovingly.

Better that he should support the wrong cause conscientiously than the right one insincerely. Better be a true man on the side of wrong, than a false man on the side of right.

XIII.

ISAAC BLESSING HIS SONS.

"And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."—Gen. xxvii. 1-4.

In chapter xxv. we find Abraham preparing for death by a last will: making Isaac his heir, and providing for his other children by giving them gifts while he yet lived, and so sending them out into the world. In this chapter, the heir himself is preparing to die. The rapidity with which these chapters epitomize life, bringing its few salient points together, is valuable as illustrative of what human existence is. It is a series of circles intersecting each other, but going on in a line. A few facts comprise man's life. A birth—a marriage—another birth—a baptism—a will—and then a funeral: and the old circle begins again.

Isaac is about to declare his last will. It is a solemn act, in whatever light we view it, if it were only for the thought that we are writing words which will not be read till we are gone. But it is solemn, too, because it is one of those acts which tell of the immortal. First, in the way of prophetic prescience. Is it not affecting to think of a human being, not sick, nor in pain, with his natural force unabated, calmly sitting down to make arrangements for what shall be when he is in his last long sleep? But the act of an immortal is visible also in that a dead man rules the world, as it were, long after his decease. Being dead, in a sense he yet speaketh. He is yet present with the living. His existence is protracted beyond its natural span. His will is law. This is a kind of evidence of his immortality: for the obedience of men to what he has willed is a sort of recognition of his present being.

Isaac was not left without warnings of his coming end. These warnings came in the shape of dimness of eyes and failing of sight. You can conceive a state in which man should have no warnings: and instead of gradual decay, should drop suddenly, without any intimation, into eternity. Such an arrangement might have been. But God has in mercy provided reminders. For we sleep in this life of ours a charmed sleep, which it is hard to break. And if the road were of unbroken smoothness, with no jolt or shock, or unevenness in the journey, we should move swiftly on, nothing breaking the dead slumber till we awake suddenly, like the rich man in the parable, lifting up our eyes in heaven or in hell. Therefore God has given these reminders. Some of them regular—such as failing of sight, falling out of hair, decay of strength, loss of memory—which are as stations in the journey, telling us how far we have travelled: others irregular—such as come in the form of sickness, bereavement, pain—like sudden shocks which jolt, arouse, and awaken. Then the man considers, and like Isaac, says, "Behold, I am old, I know not the day of my death." We will consider—

I. Isaac's preparation for death.
II. The united treachery of Jacob and Rebekah.

I. Isaac's preparation for death. First, he longed for the performance of Esau's filial kindness as for a last time. Esau was his favorite son: not on account of any similarity between them, but just because they were dissimilar. The repose, and contemplativeness, and inactivity of Isaac found a contrast in which it rested, in the energy and even the recklessness of his first-born. It was natural to yearn for the feast of his son's affection for the last time. For there is something peculiarly impressive in whatever is done for the last time. Then the simplest acts contract a kind of sacredness. The last walk in the country we are leaving. The last time a dying man sees the sun set. The last words of those from whom we have parted, which we treasure up as more than accidental, almost prophetic. The winding up of a watch, as the last act at night. The signature of a will. In the life of Him in whom we find every feeling which belongs to unperverted humanity, the same desire is found: a trait, therefore, of the heart which is universal, natural, and right. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. *For* I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." It was the *Last* Supper.

2. By making his last testamentary dispositions. Apparently they were premature, but he did not defer them: partly because of the frailty of life, and the uncertainty whether there may be any to-morrow for that which is put off to-day: partly, perhaps, because he desired to have all earthly thoughts done with and put away. Isaac lived thirty or forty years

after this: but he was a man set apart: like one who in Roman Catholic language had received extreme unction, and had done with this world; and when he came to die, there would be no anxieties about the disposition of property to harass him. It is good to have all such things done with before that hour comes: there is something incongruous in the presence of a lawyer in the death-room, agitating the last hours. The first portion of our lives is spent in learning the use of our senses and faculties: ascertaining where we are and what. The second, in using those powers, and acting in the given sphere: the motto being, "Work, the night cometh." A third portion, between active life and the grave, like the twilight between day and night, not light enough for working, nor yet quite dark, which nature seems to accord for unworldliness and meditation. It is striking, doubtless, to see an old man hale and vigorous to the last, dying at his work like a warrior in armor. But natural feeling makes us wish, perhaps, that an interval might be given: a season for the statesman, such as that which Samuel had, on laying aside the cares of office, in the schools of the prophets; such as Simeon had, and Anna, for a life of devotion in the temple; such as the laborer has when, his long day's work done, he finds an asylum in the almshouse; such as our Church desires, where she prays against sudden death: a season of interval in which to watch, and meditate, and wait.

II. The united treachery of Jacob and Rebekah. It was treachery in both; in one sense it was the same treachery. Each deceived Isaac and overreached Esau. But it would be a rough estimate to treat the two sins as identical. This is the coarse, common way of judging. We label sins as by a catalogue. We judge of men by their acts; but it is far truer to say that we can only judge the acts by the man. You must understand the man before you can appreciate his deed. The same deed done by two different persons ceases to be the same. Abraham and Sarah both laughed when informed that they should have a son in their old age. But Sarah's was the laugh of skepticism; the other, the result of that reaction in our nature by which the most solemn thoughts are balanced by a sense of strangeness or even ludicrousness. The Pharisees asked a sign in unbelief: many of the Old Testament saints did the same in faith. Fine discrimination is therefore necessary to understand the simplest deed. A very delicate analysis of character is necessary to comprehend such acts as these, and rightly to apportion their turpitude and their palliations.

In Rebekah's case the root of the treachery was ambition; but here we find a trait of female character. It is a woman's ambition, not a man's. Rebekah desired nothing for herself, but every thing for Jacob: for him spiritual blessing—at all events, temporal distinction. She did wrong, not for her own advantage, but for the sake of one she loved. Here is a touch of womanhood. The same is observable in the recklessness of personal consequences. So as only *he* might gain, she did not care. "Upon me be the curse, my son." And it is this which forces us, even while we must condemn, to compassionate. Throughout the whole of this revolting scene of deceit and fraud, we can never forget that Rebekah was a mother. And hence a certain interest and sympathy are sustained. Another feminine trait is seen in the conduct of Rebekah. It was devotion to a person rather than to a principle. A man's idolatry is for an idea, a woman's is for a person. A man suffers for a monarchy, a woman for a king. A man's martyrdom differs from a woman's. Nay, even in their religion, personality marks the one, attachment to an idea or principle the other. Woman adores God in His personality, man adores Him in His attributes. At least that is, on the whole, the characteristic difference.

Now here you see the idolatry of the woman: sacrificing her husband, her elder son, high principle, her own soul, for an idolized person. Remark that this was, properly speaking, idolatry. For in nothing is a greater mistake made than in the conception attached to that word in reference to the affections. A mother's affection is called, by many religious people, idolatry, because it is intense. Do not mistake. No one ever loved child, brother, sister, too much. It is not the intensity of affection, but its interference with truth and duty, that makes it idolatry. Rebekah loved her son more than truth, *i. e.*, more than God. This was to idolize. And hence Christ says, "If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me." You can only test that when a principle comes in the way. There are persons who would romantically admire this devotion of Rebekah, and call it beautiful. To sacrifice all, even principle, for another—what higher proof of affection can there be? Oh, miserable sophistry! The only true affection is that which is subordinate to a higher. It has been truly said, that in those who love little, love is a primary affection; a secondary one in those who love much. Be sure he can not love another much who loves not honor more. For that higher affection sustains and elevates the lower human one, casting round it a glory which mere personal feeling could never give.

Compare, for instance, Rebekah's love for Jacob with that of Abraham for his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son to duty. Rebekah sacrificed truth and duty to her son. Which loved a son most?—which was the noblet love? Even as a question of permanence, which would last the longer? For consider what respect this guilty son and guilty mother could retain for each other after this: would not love turn into shame and lose itself in recriminations? For affection will not long survive respect, however it may protract its life by effort.

Observe, again: monsters do not exist. When you hear of great criminality, you think of natures originally monstrous, not like others. But none are liars for the sake of lying. None are cruel for cruelty's sake. It is simply want of principle that makes glaring sins. The best affections perverted—that is the history of great crimes. See here: there is no touch of compunction from first to last. The woman seems all unsexed. She has no thought of her defrauded eldest son: none of her deceived husband. There is an inflexible pursuit of her object, that is all. It is wonderful how ambition and passion dazzle to all but the end desired. It is wonderful how the true can become false, and the tender-hearted hard and cruel for an end. Nor is this lesson obsolete. Are there no women who would do the same now? Are there none who would sacrifice a son's principles or a daughter's happiness to a diseased appetite for distinction? Are there none who would conceal a son's extravagance, foster it, furnish it means unknown, or in an underhand way, in what is called the manœuvring of fashionable life; and do that for family advancement from which the strong sense and principle of a father would recoil and revolt? And all this, not because they are monsters, but because their passion for distinction is inflamed, and their affections unregulated.

Now look at Jacob's sin. He was not without ambition; but he had not that unscrupulous, inflexible will which generally accompanies ambition and makes it irresistible. A bad man naturally he was not: nor a false man: but simply a pliable and weak man. Hence he became the tool of another—the agent in a plan of villainy which he had not the contrivance to originate. He was one of those who, if they could, would have what they wish innocently. He would not play false, yet he would unjustly have. He was rather afraid of doing the deceit than anxious that the deceit should not be done. Here was the guilt in its germ. He had indulged and pampered the fancy; and be sure he who wishes a temporal end for itself, does, or will soon, will the means. All temptations and all occasions of sin are powerless, except as far as they fall in with previous meditations upon the guilt. An act of sin is only a train long laid, fired by a spark at last. Jacob pondered over the desire of the blessing, dallied with it, and then fell. Now observe the rapidity and the extent of the inward deterioration. See how this plain, simple man, Jacob, becomes by degrees an accomplished deceiver; how he shrinks at nothing; how, at first unable to conceive the plan devised by another, he becomes at last inventive. At first the acted falsehood—a semblance; then the lie in so many words; then the impious use of the name, "The Lord thy God brought it me." How he was forced by fear and the necessities of begun guilt into enormity: deeper and deeper. Happy the man who can not, even from the faint shadows of his own experience, comprehend the desperate agony of such a state: the horror mixed with hardening effrontery with which a man feels himself compelled to take step after step, and is aware at last that he is drifting, drifting, from the great shore of truth—like one carried out by the tide against his will, till he finds himself at last in a sea of falsehood, his whole life one great dream of false appearance.

Let us apply this briefly.

Doubtless perverted good is always different from original vice. In his darkest wanderings, one in whom the Spirit strives is essentially different from one who is utterly depraved. Sensibility to anguish makes the difference, if there were nothing else. Jacob, lying in this way, plunging headlong, deeper and deeper, was yet a different man from one who is through and through hollow. Grant this—and yet that fact of human pervertibility is an awful fact and mystery. Innocence may become depraved: delicate purity may pass into grossness. It is an appalling fact. Transparency of crystal clearness may end in craft, double-dealing, contrivance. Briefly, therefore—

1. Learn to say "No."
2. Beware of those fancies, those day-dreams, which represent things as possible which should be forever impossible. Beware of that affection which cares for your happiness more than for your honor.

Lastly, in the hour of strong temptations, throwing ourselves off self, distrusting ourselves, let us rest in Him who, having been tempted, knows what temptation is; who "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

XIV.

SALVATION OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did," etc.—Acts ix. 36.

"There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band," etc.—Acts x. 1.

Two events are connected with St. Peter's stay at Joppa: the miraculous restoration of Dorcas, and the vision which prepared for the reception of Cornelius into the Christian Church. The apostle was at Lydda, when he was summoned by the news of the death of Dorcas to Joppa, about twelve miles distant. Now observe here the variety of the gifts which are bestowed upon the Christian Church. Four characters, exceedingly diverse, are brought before us in this ninth chapter: Paul, a man singularly gifted, morally and intellectually, with qualities more brilliant than almost ever fell to the lot of man; Peter, full of love and daring, a champion of the truth; Ananias, one of those disciples of the inward life whose vocation is sympathy, and who, by a single word, "brother," restore light to those that sit in darkness and loneliness; lastly, Dorcas, in a humbler, but not less true sphere of divine goodness, clothing the poor with her own hands, practically loving and benevolent.

We err in the comparative estimate we form of great and small. Imagine a political economist computing the value of such a life as this of Dorcas. He views men in masses: considers the economic well-being of society on a large scale: calculates what is productive of the greatest good for the greatest number. To him the few coats and garments made for a few poor people would be an item in the world's well-being scarcely worthy of being taken into the reckoning. Let the historian estimate her worth. The chart of time lies unrolled before him. The fall of dynasties and the blending together of races, the wars and revolutions of nations that have successively passed across the world's stage—these are the things that occupy him. What are acts like hers in the midst of interests such as these and of contemplations so large? All this is beneath the dignity of history. Or again, let us summon a man of larger contemplations still. To the astronomer, lifting his clear eye to the order of the stars, this planet itself is but a speck. To come down from the universe to the thought of a tiny earth is a fell descent; but to descend to the thought of a humble female working at a few garments, were a fall indeed.

Now rise to the Mind of which all other minds are but emanations—and this conception of grand and insignificant is not found in His nature. Human intellect, as it rises to the great, neglects the small. The Eternal mind condescends to the small; or rather, with It there is neither great nor small. It has divided the rings of the earthworm with as much microscopic care as the orbits in which the planets move: It has painted the minutest feather on the wing of the butterfly as carefully as It has hung the firmament with the silver splendor of the stars. Great and small are words which have only reference to us.

Further still: judging the matter by the heart, ascending to the heart of God, there is another aspect of the subject: great belongs only to what is moral—infinitude and eternity are true of feelings rather than of magnitude, or space, or time. The mightiest distance that mind can conceive, calculable only by the arrow-flight of light, can yet be measured. The most vast of all the cycles that imagination ever wanted for the ages that are gone by, can yet be estimated by number. But tell us, if you can, the measure of a single feeling. Find for us, if you can, the computation by which we may estimate a single spiritual affection. They are absolutely incommensurable—these things together, magnitude and feeling. Let the act of Dorcas be tried thus. When the world has passed away, and the lust thereof, "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The true infinite, the real eternal, is love. When all that economist, historian, philosopher can calculate, is gone, the love of Dorcas will still be fresh, and living, in the eternity of the illimitable Mind.

Observe, once more, the memorial which she left behind her. When Peter went into the upper chamber, he was surrounded by the poor widows, who showed him, weeping, the garments she had made. This was the best epitaph: the tears of the poor.

There is a strange jar upon the mind in the funeral, when the world is felt to be going on as usual. Traffic and pleasure do not alter when our friend lies in the upper chamber. The great, busy world rolls on, unheeding, and our egotism suggests the thought, So will it be when I am not. This world, whose very existence seems linked with mine, and to subsist only in mine, will not be altered by my dropping out of it. Perhaps a few tears, and then all that follow me and love me now will dry them up again. I am but a bubble on the stream: here to-day, and then gone. This is painful to conceive. It is one of the pledges of our immortality that we long to be remembered after death; it is quite natural. Now let us inquire into its justice.

Dorcas died regretted: she was worth regretting, she was worth being restored; she had not lived in vain, because she had not lived for herself. The end of life is not a thought, but an action—action for others. But you, why should you be regretted? Have you discovered spiritual truth, like Paul? Have you been brave and true in defending it, like Peter? or cheered desolate hearts by sympathy, like Ananias? or visited the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, like Dorcas? If you have, your life will leave a trace behind which will not soon be effaced from earth. But if not, what is your worthless, self-absorbed existence good for, but to be swept away, and forgotten as soon as possible? You will leave no record of yourself on earth, except a date of birth, and a date of death, with an awfully significant blank between.

The second event connected with St. Peter's stay at Joppa was the conversion of Cornelius.

A new doctrine was dawning on the Church. It was the universality of the love of God. The great controversy in the early history of Christianity was, not the atonement, not predestination, not even, except at first, the resurrection, but the admissibility of the Gentiles to the Church of Christ. It was the controversy between Christianity, the universal religion, and Judaism, the limited one. Except we bear this in mind, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles will be alike unintelligible to us.

The germ of this truth had been planted by Stephen. St. Paul was now raised up as his successor, to develop it still further. So that now a very important crisis had arrived. For it has been well observed, that had St. Peter's acceptance of this truth been delayed by leaving it to gradual mental growth, the effects would have been incalculably disastrous to Christianity. A new apostle had arisen, and a new church was established at Antioch; and had St. Peter and the rest been left in their reluctance to this truth, the younger apostle would have been necessarily the leader of a party to which the elder apostles were opposed, and the Church of Antioch would have been in opposition to the Church at Jerusalem: a timely miracle, worthy of God, prevented this catastrophe: at the very crisis of time St. Peter's mind, too, was enlightened with the truth.

The vision was evidently in its form and in its direction the result of previous natural circumstances. The death of Stephen must have had its effect on the apostle's mind. That truth for which he died, the transient character of Judaism, must have suggested strange new thoughts, to be pondered on and doubted on; add to this, the apostle was in a state of hunger. In ecstasy, or trance, or vision, things meet for food presented themselves to his mental eye. Evidently the *form* in which this took place was shaped by his physical cravings, the direction depended partly upon his previous thoughts concerning the opening question of the Church. But the eternal truth, the spiritual verity conveyed by the vision, was clearly of a higher source. Here are the limits of the natural and the supernatural closely bordering on each other.

And this is only analogous to all our life. The human touches on the Divine, earth borders upon heaven—the limits are not definable. "I live," said St. Paul. Immediately after, he corrects himself: "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Man's spirit prays; yet is it not "the Spirit making intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered?" As if the mind of man were hardly to be distinguished from the mind of God. We are on the brink of the world unseen —on the very verge of the spirit-realm. Everywhere around us is God.

Now the contents of this vision were—a vessel let down from heaven, full of animals, domestic and wild, clean and unclean. This was let down from heaven, and taken up to heaven again. All had come from God, so that the truth conveyed was clear enough. These distinctions of clean and unclean were but conventional and artificial, after all—temporal arrangements, not belonging to the unalterable. God had made all and given all. The analogy was not difficult to perceive. God is the Creator of mankind. He is the universal Father. All have come from Him. Sanctified by Him, there can be no man common or unclean.

Against even the first part of this St. Peter's mind revolted—"Not so, Lord." It is not a little remarkable that the two first to whom this expansive truth was revealed were bigoted men: St. Paul the Jewish, St. Peter the Christian bigot. For St. Peter was a Christian, yet a bigot still. Is this wonderful and rare? or are we not all bigots in our way, the largest-minded of us all? St. Peter was willing to admit a proselyte: the admission of an entire Gentile was a stumbling-block; afterwards he could admit a Gentile, but hesitated to eat with him. There are some of us who can believe in the Christianity of those who are a little beyond our own Church pale; some who even dimly suspect that God may love the Jew; some, too, who will be ready, with qualifications, to acknowledge a benighted Roman Catholic for a brother; but how many of us are there who would not be startled at being told to love a Unitarian? how many who would not shrink from the idea as over-bold, that he who is blind to the Redeemer's Deity, yet loving Him with all his heart, may perchance have that love accepted in place of adoration, and that it may be at our peril that we call him "common or unclean?" Oh! there was a largeness in the heart of Christ, of which we have only dreamed of as yet—a something, too, in these words, "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean," which it will require, perhaps, ages to develop.

At the same, or nearly the same time when this was taking place at Joppa, a manifestation, somewhat similar, was going on at Cæsarea, a day's journey distant. Remark here the coincidence. There was an affinity, it seems, between the minds of these two men, Peter and Cornelius—a singular, mysterious sympathy. Nay, more than that, very shortly before, a similar phenomenon had been felt in the mind of St. Paul, more than a hundred miles off, in a valley near Damascus; concerning all which we can say little, except that it is very plain there is a great deal more going on upon earth than our ordinary life conceives of. In the scientific world, similar coincidences perpetually take place: discoveries, apparently unconnected, without any apparent link between the minds which make them, are announced from different parts of the world almost simultaneously. No man, perhaps, has been altogether unconscious of mental sympathies, coincidences of thought, which are utterly inexplicable. All that I deduce from this is the solemn awfulness of the universe in which we live. We are surrounded by mystery. Mind is more real than matter. Our souls and God are real. Of the reality of nothing else are we sure: it floats before us, a fantastic shadow-world. Mind acts on mind. The Eternal Spirit blends mind with mind, soul with soul, and is moving over us all with His mystic inspiration every hour.

In Cæsarea there was a cohort of soldiers, the body-guard of the governor who resided there. They were not, as was the case in other towns, provincial soldiers, but, being a guard of honor, were all Romans, called commonly the Italian band. One of the centurions of this guard was Cornelius

—"a devout man." A truth-loving, truth-seeking, truth-finding man; one of those who would be called in this day a restless, perhaps an unstable man; for he changed his religion twice. He had aspirations which did not leave him contented with paganism. He found in Judaism a higher truth, and became a proselyte. In Judaism he was true to the light he had: he was devout, gave alms, and even influenced some of the soldiers of the guard, as it would appear (ver. 7). The result was as might have been expected. "He that hath, to him shall be given." Give us such a man, and we will predict his history. He will be ever moving on; not merely changing, but moving on, from higher to higher, from light to light, from love to love, till he loses himself at last in the Fountain of Light and the Sea of Love. Heathenism, Judaism, Christianity. Not mere change, but true, ever upward progress. He could not rest in Judaism, nor anywhere else on earth.

To this man a voice said, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God." Prayers—that we can understand; but alms—are then works, after all, that by which men become meritorious in the sight of God? To answer this, observe: Alms may assume two forms. They may be complete or incomplete. Alms complete—works which may be enumerated, estimated—deeds done and put in as so much purchase—ten times ten thousand such will never purchase heaven. But the way in which a holy man does his alms is quite different from this. In their very performance done as pledges of something more; done with a sense of incompleteness; longing to be more nearly perfect—they become so many aspirations rising up to God; sacrifices of thanksgiving, ever ascending like clouds of incense, that rise and rise in increasing volumes, still dissatisfied and still aspiring. Alms in this way become prayers—the highest prayers; and all existence melts and resolves itself into a prayer. "Thy prayers and thine alms;" or if you will, "Thy prayers and thy prayers," are come up to be remembered; for what were his alms but devout aspirations of his heart to God?

Thus, in the vision of the everlasting state which John saw in Patmos, the life of the redeemed presented itself as one eternal chant of grateful hallelujahs, hymned on harps whose celestial melodies float before the Throne forever. A life of prayer is a life whose litanies are ever fresh acts of self-devoting love. There was no merit in those alms of Cornelius; they were only poor imperfect aspirations, seeking the ear of God, and heard and answered there

All this brings us to a question which must not be avoided —the salvability of the heathen world. Let us pronounce upon this, if firmly, yet with all lowliness and modesty.

There are men of whose tenderness of heart we can not doubt, who have come to the conclusion that without doubt the heathen shall perish everlastingly. A horrible conclusion: and if it were true, no smile should ever again pass across the face of him who believes it. No moment can, with any possible excuse, be given to any other enterprise than their evangelization, if it be true that eternity shall echo with the myriad groans and agonies of those who are dropping into it by thousands in an hour. Such men, however, save their character for heart at the expense of their consistency. They smile and enjoy the food and light just as gayly as others do. They are too affectionate for their creed; their system only binds their views; it can not convert their hearts to its gloomy horror.

We lay down two principles: No man is saved by merit, but only by faith. No man is saved, except in Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

But when we come to consider what is saving faith, we find it to be the broad principle of trust in God, above all misgivings, living for the invisible instead of the seen. In Hebrews xi. we are told that Noah was saved by faith. Faith in what? In the atonement? or even in Christ? Nay, but in the predicted destruction of the world by water; the truth he had, not the truth he had not. And the life he led in consequence, higher than that of the present-seeking world around him, was the life of faith, "by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Salvation, therefore, is annexed to faith. Not necessarily faith in the Christian object, but in the truth, so far as it is given. Does God ask more?

Again: the Word revealed itself to men before it was manifested in the flesh. Before this universe was called into being, when neither star nor planet was, the Father was not alone. From all eternity He contemplated Himself in Another—Himself in Himself; else God had not been love. For another is required for love. To lose and find one's self again in another's being, that is love. Except this, we can not conceive love possible to Him. But thus with the other, which was His very self; in language theological, the Eternal Son in the bosom of the Father; God thrown into objectivity by Himself. There was a universe before created universe existed; there was love when as yet there was none except Himself on whom that affection could be thrown; and the expression of Himself to Himself, the everlasting Word, filled eternity with the anthem of the Divine soliloquy. Now this word expressed itself to man before it mingled itself with flesh. "Before Abraham was, I am." Read we not in the Old Testament of revelations made to men in visions, trances, day-dreams, sometimes in voices, articulate or inarticulate, sometimes in suggestions scarcely distinguishable from their own thoughts?

Moreover, recollect that the Bible contains only a record of the Divine dealings with a single nation; His proceedings with the minds of other people are not recorded. That large other world—no less God's world than Israel was, though in their bigotry the Jews thought Jehovah was their own exclusive property—scarcely is—scarcely could be named on the page of Scripture except in its external relation to Israel. But at times, figures, as it were, cross the rim of Judaism, when brought in contact with it, and passing for a moment as dim shadows, do yet tell us hints of a communication and a revelation going on unsuspected. We are told, for example, of Job—no Jew, but an Arabian emir, who beneath the tents of Uz contrived to solve the question to his heart which still perplexes us through life—the co-existence of evil with Divine benevolence; one who wrestled with God as Jacob did, and strove to know the shrouded Name, and hoped to find that it was love. We find Naaman the Syrian, and Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian, under the providential and loving discipline of God. Rahab the Gentile is saved by faith. The Syrophenician woman by her sick daughter's bedside, amidst the ravings of insanity, recognizes, without human assistance, the sublime and consoling truth of a universal Father's love in the midst of apparent partiality. The "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" had not left them in darkness.

From all this we are constrained to the conviction that there is a Church on earth larger than the limits of the Church visible; larger than Jew, or Christian, or the Apostle Peter, dreamed; larger than our narrow hearts dare to hope even now. They whose soarings to the First Good, First Perfect, and First Fair, entranced us in our boyhood, and whose healthier aspirations are acknowledged yet as our instructors in the reverential qualities of our riper manhood—will our hearts *allow* us to believe that they have perished? Nay. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." The North American Indian who wor shipped the great Spirit, and was thereby sustained in a life more dignified than the more animalized men amongst his countrymen; the Hindoo who believed in the rest of God, and in his imperfect way tried to "enter into rest," not forgetting benevolence and justice—these shall come, while "the children of the kingdom"—men who, with greater light, only did as much as they—"shall be cast out."

These, with an innumerable multitude whom no man can number, out of every kingdom, and tongue, and people, with Rahab and the Syrophenician woman, have entered into that Church which has passed through the centuries, absorbing silently into itself all that the world ever had of great, and good, and noble. They were those who fought the battle of good against evil in their day, penetrated into the invisible from the thick shadows of darkness which environed them, and saw the open Vision which is manifested to all, in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness—to all, in other words, who live devoutly towards God, and by love towards man. And they shall hereafter "walk in white, for they are worthy." * * * * It may be that I err in this. It may be that this is all too daring. Little is revealed upon the subject, and we must not dogmatize. I may have erred; and it may be all a presumptuous dream. But if it be, God will forgive the daring of a heart whose hope has given birth to the idea; whose faith in this matter simply receives its substance and reality from things hoped for, and whose confidence in all this dark, mysterious world can find no rock to rest upon amidst the roaring billows of uncertainty, except "the length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height, of the love which passeth knowledge," and which has filled the universe with the fullness of His Christ.

XV.

THE WORD AND THE WORLD.

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," etc.—Acts xix. 1, 2.

We consider, to-day, the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, but first we must make some preliminary remarks.

The second missionary journey of St. Paul was done, and he had left Europe for Asia. The object of his travel was threefold. 1. To complete in the temple of Jerusalem the vow which he had begun at Corinth (xviii. 18, 21). 2. To visit Antioch, the mother-church of Gentile Christianity, where his presence was much needed (xviii. 22). 3. To revisit the churches of Galatia, and strengthen those who had been tempted by false teaching in his absence (xviii. 23).

The last two of these objects were connected with one single point of interest. It was the Jewish controversy, which was then at its height. The council of Jerusalem had decided that a Gentile was not dependent for salvation on the Jewish law (xv. 23–29). But another question remained still open: Was a Christian who did not obey the law on the same level as a Christian who did obey it? Was it not a superior religious standing-ground, to add the ritual life to the life of faith?

With this question the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians is occupied. That epistle does not deal with the question, whether the ritual law is necessary for salvation; but with this—whether a Gentile Christian became a higher man than before by a ceremonial life; whether, in St. Paul's words, "having begun in the spirit," he could be "made perfect through the flesh."

At Antioch that question assumed a practical form. The Jewish and Gentile Christians had lived in harmony, until certain zealous ritualists came from Jerusalem, where St. James presided. Then a severance took place. The law-observing disciples admitted these new converts to be Christians, but would not admit their standing in the Church to be equal to their own. They denied their complete brotherhood. They refused to eat with them. A Christian, not observing the ceremonial law, was to a Christian who did observe it very much what a proselyte of the gate was to an ancient Jew.

Two men of leading station yielded to this prejudice, though it was destructive of the very essence of Christianity. These were St. Peter and Barnabas. The "dissimulation," as St. Paul calls it, of these two apostles suggests two instructive lessons.

The yielding of Barnabas reminds us of the insecurity of mere feeling. Barnabas was a man of feeling and fine sensibilities. He could not bear to have his relative Mark severely judged (Acts xv. 36–39, and Col. iv. 10). It pained him to the heart to see that Paul, when he first essayed to join himself to his disciples, was misunderstood (Acts ix. 26, 27).

He was a "son of consolation." He sold his property to distribute to the Christian poor (Acts iv. 36, 37). He healed many a broken heart. But he wanted just that firmness which men of feeling so often want—the power of standing steadily by a principle.

The unsteadiness of St. Peter exhibits a different truth. It tells that a fall, however it may qualify a man for giving advice to others similarly tempted, does not qualify for future consistency, nor for the power of showing mercy in the highest way. No doubt St. Peter's fall, after his conversion, peculiarly fitted him for strengthening his brethren. But sin weakens the power of resistance. He who yields once will more easily yield the second time. He who shrunk from standing by his Master found it fearfully easy to shrink from abiding by a principle. Sin indulged breaks down the barriers between good and evil, and turns strength into weakness! And failure does not make men merciful to others. St. Peter is just as hard to the Gentile Christians, expelling them from Christian society for that which he knew to be indifferent, as if he had always been firm in his own integrity. He only can judge of error and show mercy, who has been "tempted, yet without sin." This nineteenth chapter is divisible into three chief subjects:

I. The baptism of John's disciples.
II. The burning of the "Ephesian letters."
III. The tumult occasioned by the worshippers of Diana.

I. When St. Paul came to Ephesus, he found twelve disciples of John, bearing the name of Christians, but having a very imperfect form of Christianity. Now the baptism of John, which was all these men knew, means the doctrine of John—that cycle of teaching which is briefly symbolized by the chief ritual act of the system. The system of John was contained in a very narrow range of truth. It was such truth as we might have expected from a man who had been so disciplined. It was John's lot to be born into the world in a period of highly-advanced society; and in that hot-bed of life-fictions, Jerusalem, the ardent mind of the young man found nothing to satisfy the cravings of its desire. He wanted something deeper and truer than the existing systems could afford him. He went to the Sadducee and the Pharisee in vain. He found no life in the Jewish ritual—no assistance from the rabbis. He went into the wilderness to commune with God, to try what was to be learned from Him by a soul in earnest, without church, ministers, or ordinances. The heavens spoke to him of purity, and the river by his side of God's eternity. Locusts and honey, his only food, taught him that man has a higher life to nourish than that which is sustained by epicurean luxuries. So disciplined John came back to his countrymen. As might be expected, no elaborate theology formed any part of his teaching. "We want a simpler, purer, austerer life. Let men be real. Fruits worthy of repentance—fruits, fruits, not profession. A new life. Repent." That was the burden of John's message.

A preparatory one evidently, one most incomplete in itself. It implied the need of something additional, as St. Paul told these converts. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." And none felt more distinctly than John that his was merely an initial work. That was a touching acknowledgment of the subordinate part he had to perform in the construction of the world's new life. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The work of John was simply the work of the axe. "The axe is laid to the root of the trees;" to destroy, not to build; to cut up by the roots ancient falsehoods; to tear away all that was unreal; to make a clearance that the light of day might come in. A great work, but still not the greatest.

And herein lay the difference between the two baptisms. John baptized with water, Christ with the Holy Ghost and fire. The one was simply the washing away of a false and evil past; the other was the gift of the power to lead a pure, true life.

This was all that these disciples knew; yet remark, they are reckoned as Christians. They are called "certain disciples"—that is, of Jesus. They knew little enough of Christianity; they had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity they knew not, nor that of sanctification, nor probably that of the atonement. And yet in the Word of God they are called disciples of Christ.

Let us learn from that a judgment of charity. Let not the religious man be too prone to talk with contempt of a legal spirit. Let him not sneer at "merely moral men." Morality is not religion, but it is the best soil on which religion grows. He who lives an honest, sincere, honorable life, and has strong perceptions of moral right and moral wrong, may not have reached the highest stages of spirituality; he may "know only the baptism of John;" he may aim as yet at nothing higher than doing his duty well, "ac cusing no man falsely, being content with his wages," giving one coat out of two to the poor; and yet that man, with scanty theology and small spiritual experience, may be a real "disciple" in the school of Christ, and one of the children of the Highest.

Nay, it is the want of this preparation which so often makes religion a sickly plant in the soul. Men begin with abundance of spiritual knowledge; they understand well the "scheme of salvation;" they talk of religious privilege, and have much religious liberty; they despise the formal spirit and the legal spirit. But if the foundation has not been laid deep in a perception of the eternal difference between right and wrong, the superstructure will be but flimsy. I believe it is a matter of no small importance that the baptism of John should precede the baptism of Christ; that is, that a strict life, scrupulous regularity, abhorrence of evil—perhaps even something too austere, the usual accompaniment of sincerity at the outset—should go before the peace which comes of faith in Christ. First the blade, *then* the ear, then the full corn in the ear. You can not have the harvest first. There is an order in the development of the soul, as there is in the development of the year of nature, and it is not safe to *force*. Nearly two thousand years were spent in the Divine government in teaching the Jews the meaning of holiness, the separation of right from wrong. And such must be the order of the education of children and of men. The baptism of repentance before the baptism of the Spirit.

The result which followed this baptism was the gifts of tongues and prophecy. On a former occasion I endeavored to explain what is meant by the gift of tongues. It appeared, then, that "tongues" were not so much the power of speaking various languages, as the power of speaking spiritual truths with supernatural and heavenly fervor. This passage favors that interpretation. The apostle was there with twelve new converts. To what purpose was the supposed use of various languages among such a number, who already understood one another? It would seem more like the showing off of a new accomplishment than the humble character of Christian modesty permits. If this gift simply made them linguists, then the miracle was of a temporary and earthly character. But if it consisted in elevating their spiritual intuitions, and enabling them to speak, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," then you have a miracle—celestial indeed, worthy of its Spirit-Author. If it were only a gift of languages, then the miracle has nothing to do with us; but if it were the elevating of the natural faculties by God's Spirit to a higher and diviner use, then we have a marvel and a truth which belongs to all ages. The life is the light of men. Give life, and light follows. Expand the heart, and you enlarge the intellect. Touch the soul with love, and then you touch the lips with hallowed fire, and make even the stammering tongue speak the words of living eloquence.

This was the gift of tongues that followed the reception of the Divine Spirit.

II. The second subject in the chapter is the burning of the "Ephesian letters."

Ephesus was the metropolis of Asia. Its most remarkable feature was the temple of Diana—one of the wonders of the world. It contained a certain image, misshapen, of a human form, reported by tradition to have fallen from the skies; perhaps one of those meteoric stones, which, generated in the atmosphere, and falling to the ground, are reckoned by the vulgar to be thunderbolts from heaven.

This image represented Nature, the prolific nurse and source of all life, and the worship was a worship of Nature. Upon the base of the statue were certain mysterious sentences, and these, copied and written upon papers and amulets, were known far and wide by the name of "Ephesian letters." This was the heathen form of magical superstition. But it seems there was a Jewish practice of the occult art besides. They used certain incantations, herbs, and magical formulas, said by tradition to have been taught by Solomon, for the expulsion of diseases and the exorcism of evil spirits.

The state of Ephesus, like that of Corinth and Athens, was one of metropolitan civilization; and it is nothing strange that in such a stage of social existence, arts and beliefs like these should flourish; for there is always a craving in the soul of man for something supernatural, an irrepressible desire for communion with the unseen world. And where an over-refined civilization has choked up the natural and healthy outlets of this feeling, it will inevitably find an unnatural one. The restless spirit of those times, dissatisfied with their present existence, in spite of itself feeling the degradation of the life of epicurean indolence and selfishness, instinctively turned to the other world in quest of marvels. We do not wonder to find atheism and abject superstition co-tenants of the same town or the same mind. We do not marvel that in the very city where reasonable Christianity could scarcely find a footing, a mob could be found screaming for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" that when men had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," wise men and men in authority should be believers in "the image which fell down from Jupiter." Ephesus was exactly the place where Jewish charlatans and the vendors of "Ephesian letters" could reap a rich harvest from the credulity of skeptical voluptuaries.

It is difficult to know what to say about this Oriental magic. Shall we say that it was all imposture? or account for its success by the power of a highly-excited imagination? or believe that they were really making use of some unknown powers of nature, which they themselves in ignorance supposed to be supernatural? Little can now be decided. That the magicians themselves believed in their own art is plain, from the fact of the existence of these costly "Ephesian letters," and scientific "curious books," which had apparently reached the dignity of an elaborate system; and also from the fact that some of them, as the seven sons of Sceva, believed in Christianity as a higher kind of magic, and attempted to use its formula, as more efficacious than their own. "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." Had they been only impostors, they would have taken Paul for an impostor too.

Here was one of those early attempts, which in after ages became so successful, to amalgamate Christianity with the magical doctrines. Gnosticism was the result in the East, Romanism the result in the West.

But the spirit of Christianity brooks no amalgamation. The essence of magic consists in this: the belief that by some external act—not connected with moral goodness, nor making a man wiser or better—communication can be insured with the spiritual world; and the tutelage of God or some superior spirit be commanded for a mortal. It matters not whether this be attempted by Ephesian letters, amulets, charms, curious books—or by sacraments, or by Church ordinances or priestly powers—whatever professes to bring God near to man, except by making man more like to God, is of the same spirit of Antichrist.

The spirit-world of God has its laws, and they are unalterable. They are such as these: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" "Blessed are the merciful—the peacemakers—the meek—the poor in spirit;" "If any man will do His will, he shall know;" "If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him. and make our abode with him."

This is Christianity. There is no way of becoming a partaker of "the powers of the world to come," except by having the heart right with God. God's presence, God's protection, is the privilege of the humble, the holy, the loving. These are the laws of the kingdom of God's Spirit, and no magic can reverse them. The contest was brought to an issue by the signal failure of these magicians to work a miracle—the man possessed leaped upon the exorcisers, and they fled wounded, upon which there was great consternation in Ephesus. The possessors of curious books came, confessed their guilt, and burnt them with their own hands in the apostle's presence.

You will observe in all this the terrible supremacy of conscience. There was struck a chord deep in the moral nature of these men, and it vibrated in torture. They could not bear their own secret, and they had no remedy but immediate confession. It is this arraigning accuser within the bosom that compels the peculator, after years of concealed theft, to send back the stolen money to his employer, with the acknowledgment that he has suffered years of misery. It was this that made Judas dash down his gold in the Temple, and go and hang himself. It is this that again and again has forced the murderer from his unsuspected security in social life, to deliver himself up to justice, and to choose a true death rather than the dreadful secret of a false life. Observe how mightily our moral nature works—for health and peace, if there be no obstruction; but for disease and torture, if it be perverted. But, anyhow, it works, and with living, indestructible force, as the juices of vigorous life, if obstructed, create and feed gigantic disease.

Consider, in the next place, the test of sincerity furnished by this act of burning the Ephesian letters. First of all it was a costly sacrifice. They were valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver. In those days, copies were not multiplied by printing; and the possessor of a secret would take care not to multiply it. Rarity created costliness. The possession of one such book was the possession of a fortune. Then, again, there was the sacrifice of livelihood. By these books they got their living. And a man who had lived to thirty or forty years of age in this mode of life was not young enough to begin the world again with a new profession. It was to throw themselves almost into beggary. Moreover, it was the destruction of much knowledge that was really valuable. As in the pursuit of alchemy real chemical secrets were discovered, so it can not be doubted that these curious manuscripts contained many valuable natural facts.

To burn them was to waste all these—to give the lore accumulated for years to the winds.

Once more: it was an outrage to feeling. Costly manuscripts, written with curious art, many of them probably the heirlooms of a family, many which were associated with a vast variety of passages in life, old feelings, old teachers and companions, these were to be committed mercilessly to the flames. Remember, too, how many other ways there were of disposing of them. Might they not be sold, and the proceeds "given to the poor?" Might they not at least be made over to some relative who, not feeling any thing wrong in the use or possession of them, would not have his conscience aggrieved? Or might they not be retained, the use of them being given up, as curious records of the past, as the treasure-stores of so much that was beautiful and wise?

And then conscience arose with her stern, clear voice. They are the records of an ignorant and guilty past. There must be no false tenderness; the sacrifice must be real, or it is none. To the flames with them, till their ashes are strewed upon the winds, and the smoke will rise up to heaven a sweet savor before God.

Whoever has made such a sacrifice as this—and every real Christian in the congregation in some shape or other has—will remember the strange medley of feeling which accompanied the sacrifice. We should err if we expected such a deed to be done with feelings entirely single. There is a mixture in all such sacrifices. Partly fear constrained the act, produced by the judgment on the other exorcists; partly genuine remorse; partly there was a lingering regret as leaf after leaf perished in the flames; partly a feeling of relief, and partly a heavy sense of loss in remembering that the work of years was obliterated, and that the past had to be lived afresh as a time wasted; partly shame, and partly a wild tumult of joy, at the burst of new hope, and the prospect of a nobler life. We can not, and dare not, too closely scan such things. The sacrifice was made, and He who knows the mixture of the earthly and the spiritual in His creatures' hearts doubtless accepted the sacrifice.

There is no Christian life that has not in it sacrifice, and that alone is the sacrifice which is made in the spirit of the conflagration of the "Ephesian letters," without reserve, without hesitation, without insincere tenderness. If the slaveholder, convinced of the iniquity of the traffic in man, sells the slaves on his estate to the neighboring planter, the mark of sincerity is wanting; or if the trader in opium or in spirits quits his nefarious commerce, but first secures the value of all that remains in his warehouse or in his ships, again there is a something which betokens the want of a heart true and honest; or if the possessor of a library becomes convinced that certain volumes are unfit for his shelves, immoral, polluting the mind of him that reads them, and yet can not sacrifice the brilliant binding and the costly edition without an equivalent, what shall we say of these men's sincerity?

Two things marked these Ephesians' earnestness—the voluntariness of their confession, and the unreserved destruction of these records and means of evil. And I say to you, if there be a man here before me with a sin upon his heart, let him remember conscience *will* arise to do her dreadful work at last. It may be when it is too late. Acknowledgment at once, this is all that remains for him to relieve his heart of its intolerable load. If he has wronged a man let him acknowledge it and ask forgiveness; if he has defrauded him of his due, or kept him from his rights, let him repair, restore, make up; or, if the guilt be one with which man intermeddleth not, and of which God alone takes cognizance, on his bended knees this night, and before the sun of to-morrow dawn, let him pour out the secret of his heart, or else, it may be that in this world, and in the world to come, peace is exiled from his heart forever.

III. We shall consider, thirdly, the sedition respecting Diana's worship. First under this head let us notice the speech of Demetrius—in which observe:

1. The cause of the slow death which error and falsehood die: shot through and through, they still linger on. Existing abuses in Church and State are upheld because they are intertwined with private interests. The general good is impeded by private cupidity. The welfare of a nation, the establishment of a grand principle, is clamored against because destructive of the monopoly of a few particular trades. The salvation of the world must be arrested that Demetrius may continue to sell shrines of Diana. This is the reason why it takes centuries to overthrow an evil, after it has been proved an evil.

2. The mixture of religious and selfish feelings. Not only "our craft," but also the worship of the great goddess Diana. Demetrius was, or thought himself sincere; a man really zealous for the interests of religion. And so it is with many a patriotic and religious cry. "My country"—"my church"—"my religion"—it supports *me*. "By this craft we have our wealth."

3. Numbers are no test of truth. What Demetrius said, and the town-clerk corroborated, was a fact—that the whole world worshipped the great goddess Diana. Antiquity, universality, popularity, were all on her side; on the other, there were only Paul, Gaius, Aristarchus. If numbers tested truth, Apollos in the last chapter need not have become the brilliant outcast from the schools of Alexandria, nor St. Paul stand in Ephesus in danger of his life.

He who seeks Truth must be content with a lonely, little-trodden path. If he can not worship her till she has been canonized by the shouts of the multitude, he must take his place with the members of that wretched crowd who shouted for two long hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" till truth, reason, and calmness were all drowned in noise.

Let us notice the judicious speech of the town-clerk, or chamberlain more properly, in which observe—

1. The impression made by the apostle on the wiser and calmer part of the community. The Asiarchs, or magistrates, were his friends. The town-clerk exculpated him, as Gallio had done at Corinth. Herein we see the power of consistency.

2. The admitted moral blamelessness of the Christians. Paul had not "blasphemed" the goddess. As at Athens, he had not begun by attacking errors, or prejudices, or even superstitions. He preached truth, and its effect began to be felt already, in the decline of the trade which flourished by the sale of silver models of the wondrous temple—a statistical fact, evidencing the amount of success. Overcome evil by good, error by truth. Christianity—opposed by the force of governments, counterfeited by charlatanism, sneered at by philosophers, cried down by frantic mobs, coldly looked at from a distance by the philosophical, pursued with unrelenting hatred by Judaism, met by unions and combinations of trades, having arrayed against it every bad passion of humanity—went swiftly on, conquering and to conquer.

The continental philosophers tell us that Christianity is effete. Let this narrative determine. Is *that* the history of a principle which has in it seeds of death? Comes *that* from the invention of a transient thought of man's, or from the Spirit of the everlasting ages?

XVI.

SOLOMON'S RESTORATION.

"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God."—Nehem. xiii. 26.

THERE is one study, my Christian brethren, which never can lose its interest for us so long as we are men: and that is, the investigation of human character. The deep interest of biography consists in this—that it is in some measure the description to us of our own inner history. You can not unveil the secrets of another heart without at the same time finding something to correspond with, and perchance explain, the mysteries of your own. Heart answers here to heart. Between the wisest and the worst there are ten thousand points of marvellous resemblance; and so the trials, the frailties, the bitterness of any human soul, faithfully traced out, ever shadow out to us a portraiture of our own experience. Give but the inner heart-history of the most elevated spirit that ever conquered in life's struggle, and place it before the most despicable that ever failed, and you exhibit to him so much of the picture of his own very self, that you perforce command his deepest attention. Only let the inarticulate life of the peasant find for itself a distinct voice and a true biographer, let the inward struggles which have agitated that rough frame be given faithfully to the world, and there is not a monarch whose soul will not be thrilled with those inner details of an existence with which outwardly he has not a single thought in common.

It is for this reason that Solomon's life is full of painful interest. Far removed as he is, in some respects, above our sympathies, in others he peculiarly commands them. He was a monarch, and none of us know the sensations which belong to rule. He was proclaimed by God to be among the wisest of mankind, and few of us can even conceive the atmosphere in which such a gifted spirit moves, original, inquiring, comprehending, one to whom Nature has made her secret open. He lived in the infancy of the world's society, and we live in its refined and civilized manhood.

And yet, brethren, when we have turned away wearied from all those subjects in which the mind of Solomon expatiated, and try to look inward at the *man*, straightway we find ourselves at home. Just as in our own trifling, petty history, so we find in him, life with the same unabated, mysterious interest; the dust and the confusion of a battle, sublime longings, and low weaknesses, perplexity, struggle; and then the grave closing over all this, and leaving us to marvel in obscurity and silence over the strange destinies of man. Humbling, brethren, is all this, at the same time that it is most instructive. God's strange dealings with the human heart, when shall they cease their interest for us? When shall it be that life, with all its mysteries, will tire us to look upon? When shall it be that the fate of man shall cease to wake up emotion in man's bosom.

Now, we are to bear in mind that the career of Solomon is a problem which has perplexed many, and is by no means an easy one to solve. He belongs to the peculiar class of those who begin well, and then have the brightness of their lives obscured at last. His morning sun rose beautifully; it sank in the evening, clouded, and dark with earthy exhalations—too dark to prophesy with certainty how it should rise on the morrow.

Solomon's life was not what religious existence ought to be. The life of God in the soul of man ought to be a thing of perpetual development; it ought to be more bright, and its pulsations more vigorous every year. Such, certainly, at least to all appearance, Solomon's was not. It was excellence, at all events, marred with inconsistency. It was original uprightness disgraced by a fall, and that fall so prolonged and signal that it has always been a disputed question among commentators whether he ever rose from it again at all. But the passage which I have selected for the text, in connection with one or two others, seems to decide this question. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?" that is, marriage with foreign wives? "Yet among many nations was there no king like him who was beloved of his God." Now there can be no doubt of the view given us in this verse. Six hundred years after Solomon had been sleeping in earthly dust, when all contemporaries were dead, and all personal feeling had passed away, when history could pronounce her calm verdict upon his existence as a whole, Nehemiah, in this passage, gave a summary of his character. He speaks to us of Solomon as a saint—a saint in whom saintliness had been wonderfully defaced—imperfect, tempted, fallen; but still ranked among those whom God's love had pre-eminently distinguished.

Now let us compare with this the prophecy which had been uttered by Nathan before Solomon was born. Thus he spoke in God's name to David of the son who was to succeed him on the throne: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men,"—*i. e.*, the rod as a human being uses it, for correction, not everlasting destruction—"and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul." In this we have a distinct covenant, made prophetically. God foretold Solomon's terrible apostasy; and with it He foretold Solomon's restoration. And there is one point especially remarkable. He parallels Solomon's career with Saul's. Saul began well, and Saul ended ill. Just so it was with Solomon. Here was the parallel. But farther than this, God distinctly warned, the parallel did not go. Saul's deterioration from good was permanent. Solomon's deterioration, dark as it was, had some point of essential difference. It was not forever. Saul's life darkened from morning brightness into the gloom of everlasting night. Solomon's life darkened too, but the curtain of clouds was rolled aside at last, and before the night set in the sun shone out in serene, calm brilliancy.

We take up, therefore, for our consideration to-day, the life of Solomon in these two particulars.

I. The wanderings of an erring spirit. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?"

II. The guidance of that spirit, amidst all its wanderings, by God's love. "There was no king like unto him who was beloved of his God."

I. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?" This is the first point for us to dwell on—the wanderings of a frail and erring human spirit from the right way. That which lay at the bottom of all Solomon's transgressions was his intimate partnership with foreigners. "Did not Solomon sin by these things?" that is, if we look to the context, marriage with foreign wives. The history of the text is this: Nehemiah discovered that the nobles of Judah during the Captivity, when law and religious customs had been relaxed, had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and then, in his passionate expostulation with them, he reminds them that it was this very transgression which led to the fall of the monarch who had been most distinguished for God's favor. In the whole Jewish system, no principle was more distinct than this—the separation of God's people from partnership with the world. Exclusiveness was the principle on which Judaism was built. The Israelites were not to mix with the nations; they were not to marry with them;

they were not to join with them in religious fellowship or commercial partnership. Every thing was to be distinct—as distinct as God's service and the world's. And it was this principle which Solomon transgressed. He married a princess of Egypt. He connected himself with wives from idolatrous countries—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites. And then Nehemiah's argument, built on the eternal truth that friendship with the world is enmity with God, is this: "Did not Solomon sin by these things?"

That Jewish law, my brethren, shadowed out an everlasting truth, God's people are an exclusive nation; God's Church is forever separated from the world. This is her charter, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." God's people may break that charter, but they do it at their own peril. And we may be very sure of this, when a religious person begins to feel an inclination for intimate communion with the world, and begins to break down that barrier which is the line of safety, the first step is made of a series of long, dark wanderings from God. We are to be separate, brethren, from the world. Mistake not the meaning of that word. The world changes its complexion in every age. Solomon's world was the nations of idolatry lying round Israel. *Our* world is not that. The world is that collection of men in every age who live only according to the maxims of their time. The world may be a profligate world, or it may be a moral world. All that is a matter of accident. Our world is a moral world. The sons of our world are not idolaters, they are not profligate, they are, it may be, among the most fascinating of mankind. Their society is more pleasing, more lively, more diversified in information than religious society. No marvel if a young and ardent heart feels the spell of the fascination. No wonder if it feels a relief in turning away from the dullness and the monotony of home life to the sparkling brilliancy of the world's society. No marvel if Solomon felt the superior charms of the accomplished Egyptian and the wealthy Tyrian. His Jewish countrymen and countrywomen were but homely in comparison. What wonder if the young monarch felt it a relaxation to emancipate himself from the thraldom of a society which had little to interest his grasping and restless mind, and to throw himself upon a companionship which had more of refinement, and more of cultivation, and more of that enlargement of mind which his own gifted character was so fitted to enjoy?

It is no marvel, brethren. It is all most natural, all most intelligible—a temptation which we feel ourselves every day. The brilliant, dazzling, accomplished world—what Christian with a mind polished like Solomon's does not own its charms? And yet now, pause. Is it in wise Egypt that our highest blessedness lies? Is it in busy restless Sidon? Is it in luxurious Moab? No, my Christian brethren. The Christian must leave the world alone. His blessedness lies in quiet work with the Israel of God. His home is in that deep, unruffled tranquillity which belongs to those who are trying to know Christ. And when a Christian will not learn this—when he will not understand that in calmness, and home, and work, and love, his soul must find its peace—when he will try keener and more exciting pleasures—when he says, I must taste what life is while I am young, its feverishness, its strange, delirious, maddening intoxication, he has just taken Solomon's first step, and he must take the whole of Solomon's after, and most bitter experience, along with it.

The second step of Solomon's wandering was the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure. And a man like Solomon can not do any thing by halves. What he did, he did thoroughly. No man ever more heartily and systematically gave himself up to the pursuit. If he once made up his mind that pleasure was his aim, then for pleasure he lived. There are some men who are *prudent* in their epicureanism. They put gayety aside when they begin to get palled with it, and then return to it moderately again. Men like Solomon can not do that. No earnest man can. No; if blessedness lies in pleasure, he will drink the cup to the dregs. Listen to what he says: "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." That was a pursuit of pleasure which was at least decided and systematic—manly. Observe, brethren, we have none of the cool, cautious sipping of enjoyment there. We have none of the feeble, languid attempts to enjoy the world which make men venture ankle-deep into dissipation, and only long for courage to go a little farther. It is the earnestness of an impassioned man, a man who has quitted God, and thrown himself, heart and soul, upon every thing that he tries, and says he will try it fairly and to the full.

"Let us see what the world is worth." Perhaps some minds amongst us now are not altogether strangers to a feeling such as this. There is many a soul, formed for higher and better things, that has, at one time or another, lost its hold on God, and felt the impulse of its own desires urging it on forever, dissatisfied, restless, panting for a celestial fruit which seems forbidden, and half expecting to find that fruit in life's excitement. These are the wanderings of an erring spirit.

But, my brethren, let us mark the wanderings of an immortal soul infinite in its vastness. There is a moral to be learnt from the wildest worldliness. When we look on the madness of life, and are marvelling at the terrible career of dissipation, let there be no contempt felt. It is an immortal spirit marring itself. It is an infinite soul, which nothing short of the Infinite can satisfy, plunging down to ruin and disappointment. Men of pleasure, whose hearts are as capable of an eternal blessedness as a Christian's, that is the terrible meaning and moral of your dissipation. God in Christ is your only Eden, and out of Christ you can have nothing but the restlessness of Cain; you are blindly pursuing your destiny. That unquenched impetuosity within you might have led you up to God. You have chosen instead that your heart shall try to satisfy itself upon husks.

There was another form of Solomon's worldliness. It was not worldliness in pleasure, but worldliness in occupation. He had entered deeply into commercial speculations. He had alternate fears and hopes about the return of his merchant-ships on their perilous three-years' voyage to India and to Spain. He had his mind occupied with plans for building. The architecture of the Temple, his own palace, the forts and towns of his now magnificent empire, all this filled for a time his soul. He had begun a system of national debt and ruinous taxation. He had become a slaveholder and a despot, who was compelled to keep his people down by armed force. Much of this was not wrong, but all of it was dangerous. It is a strange thing how business dulls the sharpness of the spiritual affections. It is strange how the harass of perpetual occupation shuts God out. It is strange how much mingling with the world, politics, and those things which belong to advancing civilization—things which are very often in the way of our duty—deaden the delicate sense of right and wrong. Let Christians be on their guard by double prayerfulness when duty makes them men of business or calls them to posts of worldly activity. Solomon did things of questionable morality which he never would have done if he had not had the ambition to distinguish himself among the princes of this world. Business and worldliness dried up the springs of his spirituality. It was the climax of Solomon's transgression that he suffered the establishment of idolatry in his dominions.

There are writers who have said that in this matter Solomon was in advance of his age—enlightened beyond the narrowness of Judaism, and that this permission of idolatry was the earliest exhibition of that spirit which in modern times we call religious toleration. But, my brethren, Solomon went far beyond toleration. It is written, when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods; for he went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. The truth seems to be, Solomon was getting indifferent about religion. He had got into light and worldly society, and the libertinism of his associations was beginning to make its impression upon him. He was beginning to ask, Is not one religion as good as another, so long as each man believes his own in earnest? He began to feel there is a great deal to be said for these different religions. After all, there is nothing certain; and why forbid men the quiet enjoyment of their own opinion? And so he became what men call liberal, and he took idolatry under his patronage. There are few signs in a soul's state more alarming than that of religious indifference, that is, the spirit of thinking all religions equally true—the real meaning of which is, that all religions are equally false.

II. We are to consider, in the last place, God's loving guidance of Solomon in the midst of all his apostasy. My Christian brethren, in the darkest, wildest wanderings, a man to whom God has shown his love in Christ is conscious still of the better way. In the very gloom of his remorse there is an instinctive turning back to God. It is enumerated among the gifts that God bestowed on Solomon, that He granted to him "largeness of heart." Now that largeness of heart which we call thoughtfulness and sensibility, generosity, high feeling, marks out, for the man who has it, a peculiar life. Life becomes an intense thing: if there be guilt, then his life will be desolating remorse; if love, then the very ecstasy of blessedness. But a cool, commonplace life he can not have. According to Scripture phraseology, Solomon had a great heart; and therefore it was that for such a one the discipline which was to lead him back to God must needs be terrible. "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men." That was God's covenant, and with tremendous fidelity was it kept.

You look to the life of Solomon, and there are no outward reverses there to speak of. His reign was a type of the reign of the power of peace. No war, no national disaster, interrupted the even flow of the current of his days. No loss of a child, like David's, pouring cold desolation into his soul—no pestilences nor famines. Prosperity and riches, and the internal development of the nation's life, that was the reign of Solomon. And yet, brethren, with all this, was Solomon happy? Has God no arrows winged in heaven for the heart, except those which come in the shape of outward calamity? Is there no way that God has of making the heart gray and old before its time, without sending bereavement, or loss, or sickness? Has the Eternal Justice no mode of withering and drying up the inner springs of happiness, while all is green, and wild, and fresh outwardly? We look to the history of Solomon for the answer.

The first way in which his aberration from God treasured up for him chastisement, was by that weariness of existence which breathes through the whole book of Ecclesiastes. That book bears internal evidence of having been written after repentance and victory. It is the experience of a career of pleasure; and the tone which vibrates through the whole is disgust with the world, and mankind, and life, and self. I hold that book to be inspired. God put it into the heart of Solomon to make that experience public. But, my brethren, by "inspired," I do not mean that all the feelings to which that book gives utterance are right or holy feelings. St. John could not have written that book. St. John, who had lived in the atmosphere of love, looking on this world as God looks on it—calmly, with the deep peace of heaven in his soul, at peace with himself, and at peace with man—could never have penned the book of Ecclesiastes. To have written the book of Ecclesiastes a man must have been qualified in a peculiar way. He must have been a man of intense feeling—large in heart, as the Bible calls it. He must have been a man who had drunk deep of unlawful pleasure. He must have been a man in the upper ranks of society, with plenty of leisure and plenty of time to brood on self. Therefore, in saying it is an inspired book, I mean the inspired account of the workings of a guilty, erring, and yet, at last, conquering spirit. It is not written as a wise and calm Christian would write, but as a heart would write which was fevered with disappointment, jaded with passionate attempts in the pursuit of blessedness, and forced to God as the last resource.

My younger brethren, that saddest book in all the Bible stands before you as the beacon and the warning from a God who loves you, and would spare you bitterness if He could.

Follow inclination now, put no restraint on feeling—say that there is time enough to be religious by-and-by—forget that now is the time to take Christ's yoke upon you, and learn gradually and peacefully that serene control of heart which must be learnt at last by a painful wrench—forget all that, and say that you trust in God's love and mercy to bring all right, and then that book of Ecclesiastes is your history. The penalty that you pay for a youth of pleasure is, if you have any thing good in you, an old age of weariness and remorseful dissatisfaction.

Another part of Solomon's chastisement was doubt. Once more turn to the book of Ecclesiastes. "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." In this, brethren, you will observe the querulous complaint of a man who has ceased to feel that God is the Ruler of this world. A blind chance, or a dark destiny, seems to rule all earthly things. And that is the penalty of leaving God's narrow path for sin's wider and more flowery one. You lose your way; you get perplexed; doubt takes possession of your soul. And, my Christian brethren, if I speak to any such, you know that there is no suffering more severe than doubt. There is a loss of aim, and you know not what you have to live for. Life has lost its meaning and its infinite significance. There is a hollowness at the heart of your existence. There is a feeling of weakness, and a discontented loss of self-respect. God has hidden His face from you because you have been trying to do without Him or to serve Him with a divided heart.

But now, lastly, we have to remark, that the love of God brought Solomon through all this to spiritual manhood. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." In this, brethren, we have the evidence of his victory. Doubt, and imprisonment, and worldliness have passed away, and clear activity, belief, freedom, have taken their place. It was a terrible discipline, but God had made that discipline successful. Solomon struggled manfully to the end. The details of his life were dark, but the life itself was earnest; and after many a fall, repentance, with unconquerable purpose, began afresh. And so he struggled on, often baffled, often down, but never finally subdued; and still with tears and indomitable trust, returning to the conflict again. And so when we come to the end of his last earthly work, we find the sour smoke, which had so long been smouldering in his heart and choking his existence, changed into bright, clear flame. He has found the secret out at last, and it has filled his whole soul with blessedness. God is man's happiness. "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

And now, brethren, let us come to the meaning and the personal application of all this. There is a way—let us not shrink from saying it—there is a way in which sin may be made to minister to holiness. "To whomsoever much is forgiven the same loveth much." There was an everlasting truth in what our Messiah said to the moral Pharisees: "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Now these are Christ's words; and we will not fear to boldly state the same truth, though it be liable to much misinterpretation. Past sin, brethren, may be made the stepping-stone to heaven. Let a man abuse that if he will by saying, "Then it is best to sin." A man may make the doctrine absurd, even shocking, by that inference, but it is true for all that. "All things work together for good to them that love God." All things, even sin. God can take even your sin, and make it work to your soul's sanctification. He can let you down into such an abyss of self-loathing and disgust, such life-weariness, and doubt, and misery, and disappointment, that if He ever raises you again by the invigorating experience of the love of Christ, you will rise stronger from your very fall, and in a manner secured against apostasy again. Solomon, king of Israel, sinned, and, by the strange power of the cross of Christ, that sin gave him deeper knowledge of himself, deeper insight into the mystery of human life, more marvellous power of touching the souls of his brother-men, than if he had not sinned. But forget not this, if ever a great sinner becomes a great saint, it will be through agonies which none but those who have sinned know.

Brethren, I speak to those among you who know something about what the world is worth, who have tasted its fruits, and found them like the Dead Sea apples—hollowness and ashes. By those foretastes of coming misery which God has already given you, those lonely feelings of utter wretchedness and disappointment when you have returned home palled and satiated from the gaudy entertainment, and the truth has pressed itself icy cold upon your heart, "Vanity of vanities"—is this worth living for? By all that, be warned. Be true to your convictions. Be honest with yourselves. Be manly in working out your doubts, as Solomon was. Greatness, goodness, blessedness, lie not in the life that you are leading now. They lie in quite a different path: they lie in a life hid with Christ in God. Before God is compelled to write that upon your heart in disgust and disappointment, learn "what is that good for the sons of men which they should do" all the days of their life under the heaven. Learn from the very greatness of your souls, which have a capacity for infinite agony, that you are in this world for a grander destiny than that of frittering away life in uselessness.

Lastly, let us learn from this subject the covenant love of God. There is such a thing as love which rebellion can not weary, which ingratitude can not cool. It is the love of God to those whom He has redeemed in Christ. "Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin? and yet there was no king like him who was beloved of his God." Let that, my Christian brethren, be to us a truth not to teach carelessness, but thankfulness. Oh! trembling believer in Christ, are you looking into the dark future and fearing, not knowing what God will be to you at the last? Remember, Christ "having loved His own who are in the world loved them to to the end." Your salvation is in the hands of Christ; the everlasting arms are beneath you. The rock on which your salvation is built is love, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

XVII.

JOSEPH'S FORGIVENESS OF HIS BRETHREN.

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."—Gen. l. 15–21.

Christianity is a revelation of the love of God—a demand of our love by God based thereon. Christianity is a revelation of Divine forgiveness—a requirement thereupon that we should forgive each other.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John xiii. 34); "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John xiii. 13–15); "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12); "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John iv. 11); "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephes. iv. 32).

Now these duties of love, forgiveness, service, are called "new commandments." But we should greatly mistake if we suppose that they are new in this sense, that they were created by the Gospel, and did not exist before. The Gospel did not *make* God love us; it only revealed His love. The Gospel did not make it our duty to forgive and love; it only revealed the eternal order of things, to transgress which is our misery. These belong to the eternal order and idea of our humanity. We are not planted by Christ in a new arbitrary state of human relationships, but redeemed into the state to which we were created.

So St. John says, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth"—old, because of the eternal order of love; new, because shown in the light of the love of Christ. Christianity is the true life—the right humanity.

Now the proof of this is, that ages before Christ appeared, they who gave themselves up to God to be led instead of to their own hearts, did actually reduce to practice, and manifested in their lives, those very principles which, as principles, were only revealed by Christ.

Here, for instance, three thousand years before Christ, Joseph, a Hebrew slave, taught by life's vicissitudes, educated by God, acts out practical Christianity—one of its deepest and most difficult lessons. There is nothing in the New Testament more childlike than this forgiveness of his brethren. Some perhaps may be shocked at dwelling on this thought: it seems to them to derogate from Christ. This is as if they thought that they honored Christ by believing that until He came no truth was known—that He created truth. These persons tremble at every instance of a noble or pure life which can be shown in persons not enlightened by Christianity. But, in truth, this is a corroboration of Christianity. Christianity is a full revelation of the truth of life, into which every one who had been here had, in his measure, struck his roots before. It is simply "the truth, the same yesterday, to-day and forever." And all instances of such a life only corroborate the truth of the revelation.

We divide our subject into two parts:

I. The petition of the brethren.
II. Joseph's forgiveness.

1. The petition was suggested by their own anticipations of vengeance. Now whence came these anticipations? I reply, from their own hearts. Under similar circumstances they would have acted so, and they took for granted that Joseph would. We suspect according to our nature, we look on others as we feel. Suspicion proves character, so does faith. We believe and suspect as we are. But unless there had been safety for them in Joseph's heart, a guaranty in the nobleness of Joseph's nature, their abject humiliation would have saved them nothing. Little they knew the power of hate, the sweetness of revenge, if they fancied that a grudge treasured up so many years would be foregone on the very verge of accomplishment for the sake of any satisfaction, prayer, apology.

Now the error of Joseph's brethren is our error towards God. Like them, we impute to God our own vindictive feelings, and, like them, we pray a prayer which is in itself an insult or absurd. We think that sin is an injury, a personal affront, instead of a contradiction of our own nature, a departure from the Divine harmony, a disfigurement of what is good. Consequently we expect that God resents it. Our vindictive feelings we impute to God: we would revenge, therefore we think He would. And then in this spirit, "Forgive us," means, "Forego thy vengeance. Do not retaliate. I have injured Thee; but lo! I apologize, I lie in the dust. Bear no malice, indulge no rancor, O God!" This is the heathen prayer which we often offer up to God. And just as it must have been unavailing in Joseph's case except there were safety in Joseph's character, so must it be useless in ours unless in God's nature there be a guaranty which we think our prayers create. Think you that God, if revengeful, can be bought off by prayer, by rolling in the dust, by unmanly cries, by coaxing, or flattery? God's forgiveness is the regeneration of our nature. God can not avert the consequences of our sin.

We must get rid of these heathen ideas of God. God's forgiveness is properly our regeneration. You can not by prayer buy off God's vindictiveness; for God is not vindictiveness, but love. You can not by prayer avert the consequences of sin, for the consequences are boundless, inseparable from the act. Nor is there in time or eternity any thing that can sever the connection. If you think that you can sin, and then by cries avert the consequences of sin, you insult God's character. You can only redeem the past by alteration of the present. By faith in God's love, by communion with His Spirit, you may redeem yourself; but you can not win the love of God by entreaty unless that love be yours already—yours, that is, when you claim it.

2. Next, observe the petition was caused by their father's insisting on their asking pardon.

He recognized the duty of apology. For Jacob knew that Joseph bore no malice. Not to change Joseph, but to fulfill their obligations, he gave the charge that required satisfaction. We know how false conceptions are of satisfaction: in the language of the old duel, to give satisfaction meant to give one who had been injured by you an opportunity of taking your life. In the language of semi-heathen Christianity, to satisfy God means to give God an equivalent in blood for an insult offered. No wonder that with such conceptions the duty of apology is hard—almost impossible. We can not say, "I have erred," because it gives a triumph. Now the true view of satisfaction is this—to satisfy, not revenge, but the law of right. The sacrifice of Christ satisfied God, because it exhibited that which alone can satisfy Him, the entire surrender of humanity. The satisfaction of an apology is doing the right—satisfying—doing all that can be done.

It may be our lot to be in Jacob's circumstances: we may be arbiters in a dispute, or seconds in a quarrel. And remember, to satisfy in this sense is not to get for your friend all his vindictiveness requires, or to make him give as little as the other demands, but to see that he does all that should of right be done.

His honor! Yes; but you can not satisfy his honor by glutting his revenge, only by making him do right. And if he has erred or injured, in no possible way can you repair his honor or heal his shame except by demanding that he shall make full acknowledgment. "I have erred" it *is* very hard to say; but because it is hard it is therefore manly. You are too proud to apologize, because it will give your adversary an advantage? But remember, the advantage is already given to him by the wrong that you have done, and every hour that you delay acknowledgment you retain your inferiority; you diminish the difference and your inferiority so soon as you dare to say, "I did wrong; forgive me."

3. Plea—as servant of the same God (ver. 17). Forgiveness is not merely a moral but a religious duty. Now remember this was an argument which was only available in behalf of the Jews. It could not have been pleaded for an Egyptian. Joseph might have been asked to forgive on grounds of humanity; but not by the sanctions of religion, if an Egyptian had offended him. For an Egyptian did not serve the God of his fathers.

How shall we apply that? According to the spirit in which we do, we may petrify it into a maxim narrower than Judaism, or enlarge it into Christianity. If by "servants of the God of our fathers," we mean our own sect, party, church, and that we must forgive *them*, narrow indeed is the principle we have learnt from this passage. But Judaism was to preserve truth—Christianity to expand it. Christianity says, just as Judaism did, "Forgive the servants of the God." Its pleas are, "Forgive: for he is thy fellow-servant. Seventy times seven times forgive thy *brother*." But it expands that word "brother" beyond what the law ever dreamed of—God is the Father of man. If there be a soul for which Christ did not die, then that man you are not, on Judaistic principles, bound to forgive. If there be one whom the love of God does not embrace in the Gospel family, then for that one *this* plea is unavailing. But if God be the Father of the race, and if Christ died for all; if the word "neighbor" means even an alien and a heretic; then this plea, narrowed by the law to his nation, expands for us to all. Because the servant of our Maker and the child of our Father, therefore he must be forgiven, let him be whosoever he may.

II. Let us consider, in the second place, Joseph's forgiveness.

1. Joseph's forgiveness was shown by his renunciation of the office of avenger—"Am I in the place of God?" Now this we may make to convey a Christian or a heathen sense, as we read it. It might read—we often do read it—we often say it thus: "I will not avenge, because God will. If God did not, I would. But certain that He will do it, I can wait, and I will wait, long years; I will watch the reverses of fortune; I will mark the progress of disease; I will observe the error, failing, grief, loss; and I will exult and say, 'I knew it, but my hand was not on him; God has revenged me better

than I could myself.' " This is the cold-blooded, fearful feeling that is sometimes concealed under Christian forgiveness. Do not try to escape the charge. That feeling your heart and mine have felt, when we thought we were forgiving, and were praised for it. That was *not* Joseph's meaning. Read it thus: " If God does not, dare I avenge? 'Am I in the place of God?' Dare I

" 'Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His justice, be the God of God?' "

So speaks St. Paul, " Vengeance is mine." Therefore wait, sit still, and see God's wrath? No! "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." This is the Christian revenge.

I say not that there is no such thing as the duty of redressing wrongs, especially those of others. There is a keen sense of wrong, a mighty demand of the heart for justice, which can not be put aside. And he who can not feel indignation against wrong can not, in a manly way, forgive injury. But I say, the only revenge which is essentially Christian is that of retaliating by forgiveness. And he who has ever tasted that Godlike feeling of forbearance when insulted; of speaking well of one who has slandered him (pleasure all the more exquisite if the slanderer does not know it); of doing service in requital of an injury; he, and only he, can know how it is possible for our frail humanity, by abnegating the place of God the Avenger, to occupy the place of God the Absolver.

2. Joseph forgave, or facilitated forgiveness, by observing the good results of what had seemed so cruel (ver. 20). Good out of evil—that is the strange history of this world, whenever we learn God's character. No thanks to you. Your sin dishonored you, though it will honor God. By our intentions, and not by the results, are our actions judged. Remember this tenaciously: forgiveness becomes less difficult, your worst enemy becomes your best friend, if you transmute his evil by good. No one can really permanently injure us but ourselves. No one can dishonor us: Joseph was immured in a dungeon. They spat on Christ. Did that sully the purity of the one, or lower the Divine dignity of the other?

3. He forgot the injury. He spake kindly to them, comforted them, and bade them fear not. An English proverb has joined forgiving and forgetting. No forgiveness is complete which does not join forgetfulness. You forgive only so far as you forget. But here we must explain, else we get

into the common habit of using words without meaning. To forget, literally, is not a matter of volition. You can by will remember—you can not by an act of will forget—you can not give yourself a bad memory if you have a good one. In that sense, to forget is a foolish way of talking. And indeed to forget in the sense of oblivion would not be truly forgiving; for if we forgive only while we do not recollect, who shall insure that with recollection hate shall not return?

More than that. In the parable of the forgiving debtor, you remember his sin in this sense was not forgotten. Fresh sin waked up all the past. He was forgiven; then he was reminded of the past debt, and cast into prison. Not for his new offense, but for his old debt, was he delivered to the tormentors—it was not forgotten. But the true Christian forgiveness, as here in Joseph's example, is unconditional. Observe—he did not hold his brethren in suspense; he did not put them on their good behavior; he did not say, "I hold this threat over you if you do it again." That is forgiving and not forgetting. But that was a frank, full, free remission—consoling them—trying to make them forget—neither by look or word showing memory, unless the fault had been repeated. It was unconditional, with no reserve behind. That was forgiving and forgetting.

To conclude. Forgiveness is the work of a long life to learn. This was at the close of Joseph's life. He would not have forgiven them in youth—not when the smart was fresh—ere he saw the good resulting from his suffering. But years, experience, trial, had softened Joseph's soul. A dungeon and a government had taught him much; also his father's recent death. Do not think that any formula will teach this. No mere maxims got by heart about forgiveness of injuries—no texts perpetually on the tongue will do this—God alone can teach it: By experience; by a sense of human frailty; by a perception of "the soul of goodness in things evil;" by a cheerful trust in human nature; by a strong sense of God's love; by long and disciplined realization of the atoning love of Christ: only thus can we get that free, manly, large, princely spirit which the best and purest of all the patriarchs, Joseph, exhibited in his matured manhood.

XVIII.

A THANKSGIVING DAY.

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole."—John v. 14, 15.

THE man to whom these words were spoken had been lying, only a few days before, a helpless, hopeless sufferer among the porches of Bethesda, together with a number of others affected in a similar manner. By a singular, unexpected, and miraculous event, he was rescued from his calamity, while the remainder were left to the mercies of public charity, or to avail themselves of the mysterious spring of Bethesda.

It was a time of festival in Jerusalem, the streets were probably echoing with the voice of mirth and festivity, with the sounds of them that kept holiday: but it was to this congregation of the sick and the miserable that the Redeemer bent his steps; it was what might have been expected from the Son of Man—"The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It was the office of the Man of Sorrows to soothe the wretched; and of all the crowded scenes that day enacting in the Holy City, the "great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered," found that their abode was the most congenial atmosphere to the soul of the Redeemer.

And in all this we have but a miniature representation of the world as it is now. Jerusalem contained within its walls, within its proud battlements, and amidst its stately temples, as much wretchedness and as much misery, separated only by a thin partition from its abodes of luxury and state, as our own metropolis does now. It is a miniature representation of the world in this, so full of outward show and of inward wretchedness. It is a representation of the world we live in, inasmuch as it is a place where selfishness prevails; for there was affixed a certain condition to the healing of the spring, that the man should be the first; if he were not the first, no miracle took place, and there was one more friendless wretch.

This man had no one to give him the little assistance required. For thirty-eight years he had been lingering here, and there appeared to have been no visitor who would supply what was wanting of the ties of blood or relationship. It is, I say, but a representation of what this world is, when the love of God has not touched the heart of man. It is a representation of the world, too, in this, that with suffering there is frequently appointed the remedy. The remedy is often found side by side with the pain it may relieve, if we could but make use of it. It is so in both bodily and spiritual maladies—there is a remedial system, a pool of Bethesda, everywhere springing up by the side of sin and suffering.

It is a representation of the world, also, that the presence of the Son of Man should be felt rather in scenes of sorrow than of joy. It is not in the day of high health and strength, when our intellect is powerful, our memory vigorous, when we feel strong in our integrity and our courage, but when our weakened powers have made us feel that we are "a worm and no man;" when our failing faculties convince us that, except for our connection with immortality, our minds would be as nothing; when we feel temptation getting too strong for us, and that we are on the brink of falling—then it is that we are taught there is a strength not our own, beyond any thing that we possess of our own. It is then that the presence of the Son of Man is felt; then is the day of our merciful and mysterious deliverance.

And there is another resemblance to be noted. The Saviour of the world went into the Bethesda porches, and out of the great number of sufferers he selected one—not because of his superior righteousness, not for any merit on his part. but for reasons hidden within His own Almighty Mind. So it is in the world—one is taken, another is left; one nation is sterile, another is fertile; one is full of diseases from which another is exempted; one man is surrounded with luxuries and comforts, another with every suffering which flesh is heir to. So much for the miniature of the world exhibited by the pool of Bethesda.

Now in connection with this subject there are two branches in which we will arrange our observations.

I. The cause of this man's disease.
II. The history of his gratitude.

I. Concerning the cause of his disease, we are not left in any doubt, the Redeemer's own lips have told us what it was —"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." So we see there was a strange connection between this bodily malady and moral evil, a connection that would have startled all around if it had been seen. No doubt the men of science, versed in the healing art, would have found some cause for his malady connected with the constitution of his bodily frame; but the Redeemer went beyond all this. Thirty-eight years before, there had been some sin committed, possibly a small sin, in our eyes at least, of which the result had been thirty-eight years of suffering; and so the truth we gather from this is, there is a connection between physical and moral evil; a connection, my Christian brethren, more deep than any of us have been accustomed to believe in.

But most assuredly, many of the most painful forms of disease that come upon the body depend upon the nervous constitution; and the nervous system is connected inseparably with the moral state more than men suppose. Often where we have been disposed to refer the whole to external causes, there has been something of moral disorder in the character which makes that constitution exquisitely susceptible of suffering and incapable of enjoyment. Every physician will tell us that indulged passions will lead to a disturbed state of body; that want of self-control in various ways will end in that wretched state when the light that falls on the eye inflicts torture, the sounds that are heard in the ear are all discord, and all this beautiful creation, so formed for delight, only ministers to the sufferings of the diseased and disorganized frame. Thus we see that external suffering is often connected with moral evil, but we must carefully guard and modify this statement, for this is not universally the case; and it is clear this was the Saviour's opinion, for when the disciples came to Him on another occasion asking whether the blind man or his parents did sin, He answered that neither had sinned, plainly showing that there was sometimes physical suffering for which there was no moral cause. In that case it was not for his own sin, or even that of others—it baffled all the investigations of man to explain it.

Now, we must remember this when we see cases of bodily suffering: we must consider that there is a great difference between the two senses in which the word punishment is used. It may be a penalty, it may be a chastisement: one meaning of punishment is, that the law exacts a penalty if it is broken—notice having been given that a certain amount of suffering would follow a certain course of action. All the laws of God, in the physical world, in the moral world, or in the political world, if broken, commonly entail a penalty. Revolutions beset a nation, shaking its very foundations, owing to some defects in the justice or wisdom of its government, and we can not say that all this comes from the dust, or springs out of the ground. There are causes in the history of past events that will account for it. The philosophical historian of future years will show the results of some political mistake, continued perhaps for centuries, by the rulers of this nation. So in the moral and in the physical world there are laws, as it were, that execute themselves. If a man eat a deleterious herb, whether he does it willingly or unconsciously, the penalty will fall on his body. If a man touch the lightning-conductor, not knowing that the air is charged with electricity, no holiness on his part will prevent the deadly stroke. But there is another kind of law, written in the hearts of men, and given to the conscience, when the penalty is awarded as the result of moral transgression, and then it becomes a chastisement, and the language of Scripture then becomes the language of our hearts. It is the rod of God that hath done all this.

There is another thing that we must bear in mind, that there are certain evils which fall upon man over which he can have no control. They come as the result of circumstances over which he has no power whatever. So, we read in the Second book of Kings, the child of the Shunammite went out amongst the reapers; he was suddenly seized with a deadly pain in his head, was taken to his mother, sate upon her lap, and died at noon. A sunstroke had struck that child; but to say that from any fault of his he was selected as the object of suffering, when the rest of the reapers were spared, would be as unjust as to say that those upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell were sinners above all the Galileans.

Moreover, to understand this we must recollect that the laws of God and the penalties of God are not miracles. If the penalty comes as the consequence appointed by God Himself, to follow certain sins, it is a natural punishment, but if it comes with no connection, it is then an arbitrary punishment. So, if a man educates a child ill, and he turns out a bad man, there is the natural connection between the penalty and the guilt. But if a man, pursuing his journey, is struck with lightning, there is no penalty there. Now, in the Old Testament we find a natural punishment falling on Eli. He allowed his children to grow up without correction, and the contempt and scorn of the whole nation fell upon that family, and the father actually died in consequence of the shock of his children's misconduct. But if the father had died in battle, or by an accident, then it would have been unjust to say that there was any connection between his misconduct and his sudden death; it would have been an arbitrary connection.

The punishments of God are generally not arbitrary: each law, as it were, inflicts its own penalty. It does not execute one that belongs to another. So, if the drunkard lead a life of intoxication, the consequence will be a trembling hand and a nervous frame; but if he be drowned in the seas when sailing in the storm, he is punished for having broken a natural law, not a moral law of God. Let us then bear in mind that if the ship convey across the ocean the heavenly-minded missionary and the scoffing infidel, if the working of the vessel be attended to, and there is nothing unusual in the winds and the waves, they will convey the one to his destination as safely as the other.

Now, the application we must make of all this is, if a man perish when out on a sabbath-day, we have no right to say that he dies because he has broken the sabbath. If famine or pestilence visit the land, it may be explained by the infringement of some of God's natural laws; the earth may not be rightly cultivated, sanitary means have not been taken to stop the pestilence; but we have no right to say that they come in consequence of political relations which are not to our mind, or of regulations of policy of which we disapprove.

There is one thing more. It is perfectly possible that transgressions against the natural laws of God may, in the end, become trespasses against His moral law, and then the penalty becomes chastisement. The first man that drank the fermented juice of the grape was perfectly innocent, even if it caused intoxication; but when he found how it affected his brain, it became sin to him thenceforward. The first time that a man enters into society which he finds hurtful to his religious feelings, he may have done it innocently; but when he sees how it lowers the tone of his character, he must mingle amongst them no more. So want of cleanliness in some Alpine regions may result from ignorance of the laws of nature; but when, in more crowded populations, it is ascertained that it is productive of disease, and injurious to those around them, then the infraction of the natural law is stigmatized as a higher degree of turpitude. That which was a penalty becomes something more of chastisement from the wrath of God. So it is that science goes on enlightening men more and more as to the laws of God's physical world, and telling them what they must and what they must not do, in order to lessen the amount of bodily suffering around us.

My Christian brethren, we have spoken of these things at some length, because all these considerations have been brought into our view by that pestilence,* from which we celebrate our deliverance this day; partly the result of causes over which man has no control, and partly the result of the disregard of natural laws; partly, also, from the presence of moral evil amongst us. That these three distinct classes of causes have been present may be proved by tracing its history. They who have made it their duty to trace out its progress tell us that its origin was in 1818, in Bengal, when it arose during the overflow of the River Ganges; and then, dividing into two streams of pestilence and death, it passed through the world; one going to the east, the other to the west. The eastern current passed on till it reached the shores of China; the western moved slowly on with gigantic tread, decimating nations as it went, cutting off nine thousand of the British army; and passing through Persia and Arabia, it destroyed twelve thousand of the pilgrims to Mecca, till it paused mysteriously and strangely on the very verge of Europe—as if the voice of God himself had said, "There is danger near; set thine house in order." By 1830 it had reached the metropolis of Russia. In 1831 it was doing its dreadful work in our own capital, while eighteen thousand fell in Paris alone; and it then passed on, as a winged messenger, across the ocean to America.

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* The cholera.

There was then a strange disappearance of the pestilence for four or five years, till 1837, when it appeared first in the southern parts of Europe, and gradually rolled its relentless course onward to our shores. In all this you will perceive something over which we have no control. It has pursued its way not guided by moral evil or by physical causes, but by some cause, explain it as you will—as electricity, or any other conjecture—it is one that baffles every effort to stay its progress. It has taken the same road, too, that it took on its former visitation. The common food of man seems changed into something poisonous, the very air is charged with contagion; every thing proclaims it as a visitation from the Almighty. And in the very character of the disease there is something that marks it out from all other diseases: it has been truly said, that in its worst cases there is but one symptom, and that one is death. A man is full of health and strength, and in two hours he is gone. It is a disease which in its best form is terrific. That being who just now stood before you in perfect health, is in a moment a cold, livid, convulsed mass of humanity, fighting with the foe that threatens to overcome him.

But yet we find, in spite of all this, that in the progress of this strange disease, great mistakes have been made by man. From the circumstance of the poorer classes being the chief sufferers, they fancied that it was inflicted by the higher, and in some places they rose against them, accusing them of poisoning the wells. And we find Christians so mistaken as to look on all this suffering, not as the natural connection between sin and its penalty, but as having some arbitrary connection with the sin of others, from which they themselves and their own party are free.

But, in the next place, we find that it really has been caused in some degree by the transgression of the laws of nature; for whatever may have been the secret origin of the disease, whatever may be the mystery of its onward course, still we know that there are certain conditions usually necessary to make it destructive. So we find that in India it was the natives who for the most part suffered, those whose constitutions had less stamina than our own. And here we see that debility produced by over-work, bad air, crowded dwellings, have been the predisposing causes; and this tells us, if ever visitation could speak, that affliction cometh not out of the dust, neither does sorrow spring from the ground. It has no direct connection with moral character, except on peculiar points. Place a worldly man and a holy man in the same unfavorable circumstances for receiving the disorder, and you will not find the one has any charm to escape the fate of the other.

But we do find that this disease is increased and propagated by human selfishness. We read of the crowds at Bethesda, of whom it was said, there was no man to put them into the water; and so it is now. The poor, the helpless, the neglected, have been the chief sufferers. Out of two hundred and forty-three who in this place have suffered from that and similar causes, one hundred and sixty-three were receiving parish relief. And in this there is something that tells us not merely of ignorance, but of selfishness; for when commissioners went through the length and breadth of the country to examine into the statistics of the disease, we were met by the startling fact that medical science, that careful nursing, could do nothing while our crowded graveyards, our teeming and airless habitations, our worn-out and unhealthy population, received and propagated the miasma; and every time that a man in the higher classes perished, it was as if the poor neglected man had spoken from the grave; or, as if God himself had been heard to speak through him. He seems to say, "I can prove to you *now* my relationship. You can receive evil from me, if nothing else has ever passed between us; the same constitution, the same flesh and blood, the same frame were once ours; and if I can do it in no oth er way, I can prove, by infecting you, that I am your brother still."

Once more: it has been produced in a degree by moral evil; vice has been as often the predisposing cause as any other external circumstance, in certain cases. I say in certain cases, not in all. A man might have been a blasphemer, or a slanderer, but neither of these sins would affect him; but those sins which are connected with the flesh, sensuality, drunkenness, gradually pervade the human frame, and fit it for the reception of this disease.

II. But we will pass on to consider the history of this man's recovery, and of his gratitude. The first cause for gratitude was his selection. He alone was taken, and others were left. He had cause for gratitude, also, in that he had been taught the connection between moral evil and its penalty. He had been taught the certainty of God's laws, how they execute themselves, and, more blessed than all, he had been taught that there was a Personal Superintendence over all the children of men. The relief had come from the personal interposition of the Son of Man. He went and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had done this. And this explains to us the meaning and the necessity of a public acknowledgment of our gratitude. It is meant to show this nation that it is not by chance, nor by the operation of science, nor by the might of man, that we have been rescued, but that our deliverance comes direct from God.

Let us observe the popular account (for John gives us the popular account) of the angel troubling the water. It matters not whether it is scientifically to be proved or not, the secret causes lie hid beyond our investigation; but this you can observe, that it was a religious act, that it was not done by chance, that there were living agents in the healing process. The man of science in the present day would tell you what were the ingredients in the spring—how it told on the cellular tissue, or on the nervous fabric; but whatever he may make of it scientifically, it is true morally and religiously; for what is every remedy but the angel, the messenger of God sent down from the Father of all mercy, the Fountain of all goodness? So when we celebrate a day of national thanksgiving, it is but the nation's voice, arising in acknowledgment of a Parent's protection—that these things come not by chance, but that there is personal superintendence over this world, and this deliverance is the proof of a Father's love.

Once more: a day of thanksgiving is meant to be a warn ing and a reminder against future sins. "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." And it has ever been so that the result of panic has been reaction. After excitemen comes apathy; after terror has been produced, by danger especially, comes indifference, and therefore comes the warning voice from the Redeemer—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

But we may perhaps say, "*My* sin did not produce this disease. It was no doing—no fault of mine; it came from causes beyond my control. The pestilence now has wreaked its vengeance; I find I had nothing to do with it, and I may dismiss the subject from my mind." My brethren, let us look into this a little more deeply. It was not directly your sin that nailed your Redeemer to the cross, but the sin of the cruel Pharisees, of the relentless multitude; yet it is said, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It arises all from this circumstance, brethren—there are two worlds, a world of evil and a world of good. The Son of Man came as the perfect and entire representation of the kingdom of holiness. He came in collision with the world of evil; He died for sinners—for the sins of others—of all who partake of the nature of moral evil: and therefore by their sin they nailed the Redeemer to the cross. All those who opposed themselves to Jesus would have opposed themselves to Moses, Zacharias, and Abel; they allowed the deeds of their fathers, and were partakers of the blood of all the prophets that had been slain upon the earth.

The men who join in a crowd, aiding and abetting the death of any individual, by the law of every country are held guilty; and now, though there may have been no distinct act of selfishness by which any man has perished at your hands; though there have been no distinct want of care for the poor—still I may fearlessly ask you all, Christian brethren, does not your conscience tell you how little the welfare and the comfort of others has been in your thoughts? As far as we have taken a part in the world's selfishness; as far as we have lived for self and not for our neighbors; as far as we have forgotten the poor sufferers lying in the porches of Bethesda—not directly, but indirectly, all that has fallen upon this land may have been sent as a chastisement to us.

And there is this to be explained—"Sin no more;" meaning apparently, that if a man did not sin, nothing more would happen. Are we to understand, then, that if a man has been blameless he will never suffer from sorrow or sickness? or that if a man will avoid sin, he will never be visited by death? To have said that would have been to contra dict the history of the Redeemer's own life and death. He died, though He sinned not. How then, brethren, can we understand it? Why, we can understand it but in this way, by recalling to our memory what has been already said of the difference between the punishment and the penalty. If a man live a humble and holy life in Christ Jesus, there is no promise that if plague visits his land it shall not come nigh him. Live in purity, live in unselfishness; there is no promise that you shall not be cut down in a day; there is nothing in religion that can shield you from what the world calls trouble—from penalty; but there is this—that which would have been chastisement is changed into penalty.

The Redeemer suffered death as a penalty; but by no means as chastisement; on the contrary, it was the richest blessing which a Father's love could bestow upon His well-beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. So it will be with every one of us. He who lives to God, rests in his Redeemer's love, and is trying to get rid of his old nature—to him every sorrow, every bereavement, every pain, will come charged with blessings, and death itself will be no longer the king of terrors, but the messenger of grace, the very angel of God descending on the troubled waters, and calling him to his Father's home.

XIX.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."—Mal. iii. 16.

The first division of our subject is suggested by the word "*then.*" When? They did thus in the times of Malachi. It is only in reference to those times that we can extract the true lesson from the conduct of the holy men whose behavior he praises. We will consider—

I. The times of Malachi.
II. The patience of the saints in evil times.

I. Not much is known of the Prophet Malachi, or his exact date. We are sure, however, that he was the last prophet of the old dispensation. He lived somewhere between the restoration from captivity and the coming of Christ.

Thus much we know of those times from history: The Jews were restored. From chap. iii., ver. 10, we learn that the Temple had been rebuilt. But Israel's grandeur was gone, although still enjoying outward prosperity. The nation had sunk into a state of political degradation, and had become successively subject to the Persians, Syrians, Romans. It is precisely that political state in which national virtues do not thrive, and national decay is sure. * * * *

Italy—Spain.

They had a glorious past. They had the enlightenment of a present high civilization. But with this there was a want of unity, manhood, and simple virtues. There was just sufficient gallingness in the yoke to produce faction and sullenness; but not enough curtailment of all physical comforts to rouse the nation as one man to reconquer freedom. It was a state in which there was no visible Divine interference.

Compare this period of Israel's history with all which had preceded it. These four hundred years belong to profane history. The writings of that period are not reckoned inspired, so widely do they differ from the Scripture tone. There were no prophets, no flood of light, " no open vision." The Word of God was precious as in that time between the death of Joshua and the calling of Samuel.* Except this solitary voice, prophecy had hushed her harp.

Now, what was given to Israel in that period?

I reply, retrospect, pause, and prospect.

Retrospect, in the sublime past which God had given her for her experience. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." On them they were to live—their nation's sacred history; God's guidance and faithfulness; the sure truth that obedience was best.

Prospect, in the expectation of better times.

Dim, vague hints of the Old Testament had pointed them to a coming revelation—a day in which God should be nearer to them, in which society should be more pure. An advent, in short.

And between these two there was a *pause.*

They were left by God to use the grace and knowledge already given by Him.

Now this is parallel to God's usual modes of dealing. For example, the pause of four hundred years in the land of Egypt, between the bright days when Abraham talked with God, and the deliverance by Moses.

The pause in Canaan when the Israelitish commonwealth was left, like a building, to settle down before being built higher, between the times of Joshua and of Samuel.

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* Four hundred and thirty-one years.

The pause in the captivity, and now again a pause.

A pause after each revelation until the next.

So, in the natural world. Just as in summer there is a gush of nature's forces and a shooting forth; and then the long autumn and winter, in which is no growth, but an opportunity, taught by past experience, for the husbandman to manure his ground, and sow his seed, and to wait for a new outpouring of life upon the world.

And just as in human life, between its marked lessons there is a pause, in which we live upon past experience—looking back and looking on. Experience and hope, that is human life: as in youth, expecting manhood, and then looking for future changes in our condition, character, so in all God's revelation system there have been periods of "open vision," and periods of pause—waiting; when men are left to experience and hope.

It is in vain that we have studied God's Word if we do not perceive that our own day and circumstances are parallel with those of the prophet Malachi. We live in the world's fourth great pause.

Miracles have ceased. Prophecy is silent. The Son of God is ascended. Apostles are no longer here to apply infallible judgment to each new circumstance as it arises, as St. Paul did to the state of the Corinthian Church.

But we are left to the great Gospel principles which have been already given, and which are to be our food till the next flood of God's Spirit, the next revelation—that which the Scripture calls "the second advent."

And the parallel holds in another respect. The Jews had but undefined hints of that which was to be. Yet they knew the general outlines and character of the coming time; they knew that it would be a searching time, it was to be the "Refiner's" day; they knew that He should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children: and they knew that the messenger age must be preceded by a falling back on simpler life, and a return to first principles, as Malachi had predicted, and as John the Baptist called them to. They knew that it was an age in which the true sacrifice would be offered.

And so now—we know not yet what shall be; "but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is." "And every man that hath this hope in Him *purifieth* himself."

We know that it will be the union of the human race—they will be "*one fold.*"

This is the outline and character of the revelation; and we may work, at least, *towards* it. "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day." "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." To strive after personal purity and attempt at producing unity, that is our work.

We rest on that we have, and hope for that we see not. And only for the glimpse that hope gives us of that, is life worth having.

II. Let us consider the conduct of different classes in these evil times.

1. Some lived recklessly.

Foremost among these were the priests, as has been always found in evil times. The riot of a priest is worse than that of the laity. Mutual corruption. Against the priests Malachi's denunciations are chiefly directed.

He speaks of the profanation of the sacred places (chap. i. 6, 7). Of sacrifice degraded (ver. 12, 13). Vice honored (chap. ii. 17). In that they called good evil and evil good. By these men belief in God was considered ridiculous.

And then it was that one of those glorious promises was made, to be fulfilled in after-times. Malachi foresaw that the Gentiles would take up the neglected service (chap. i. 10, 11), and the vision of a universal kingdom of God became the comfort of the faithful few.

2. Others lived uselessly, because despondingly.

The languor and despair of their hearts is read in the words (chap. iii. 14, 15); and indeed it is not surprising: to what point could good men look with satisfaction? The nation was enslaved, and worse—they had become slaves in spirit. Their ancient purity was gone. The very priests had become atheists. Where was the promise of His coming? Such, too, is the question of these latter times. And our reply is from past experience.

That dark day passed, and a glorious revelation dawned on the world. From what has been, we justly infer what will be. Promises fulfilled are a ground of hope for those yet unfulfilled. Where is the promise *now* of holier times? Yes, but remember the question seemed to be just as unananswerable then; it was just as unanswerable in the days of the Judges, and in the captivity in Egypt and in Babylon.

This "Scripture was written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come." Then the consolation of St. Peter becomes intelligible, "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

3. But in these evil times there were a few who compared with one another their hopes, and sought strength in Christian communion and fellowship. Of them the text speaks.

This communion of saints is twofold: it includes church fellowship and personal friendships.

It is plain that from church fellowship they could gain little in those days. Unity there was not, but only disunion. Over that state Malachi lamented in that touching appeal—"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Israel had forgotten that she was a family.

And it is true that in our day church fellowship is almost only a name. The Christianity of the nation does not bind us as individuals. Well—does the Church? Are there many traces of a common feeling? When church privileges are insisted on to produce unity, do they not produce division? Are not these words of the prophet true of us? Where are the traces of Christian brotherhood?

Here—in this town? here—in this congregation? at the holy supper which we join in to-day? Shall we meet to get *private* good, or to feel we are partakers of the same Body and the same Blood? Therefore to insist on church union as the remedy would be to miss the special meaning of this verse. The malady of our disunion has gone too deep to be cured by you or me.

We will consider it, therefore, in reference to Christian friendship. We find that within the outward Jewish Church there was an inner circle, knit together by closer bonds than circumcision or the passover—by a union of religious sympathies. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another:" they "thought upon His name."

Let us consider the blessing of Christian friendship. In such times it discharges a double office.

1. For the interchange of Christian hope and Christian feeling. It is dreary to serve God alone; it is desolate to have no one in our own circle or family from whom we can receive sympathy in our hopes. Hopes *die*.

2. It is a mighty instrument in guarding against temptation. It is a safeguard, in the way of example, and also as a standard of opinion. We should become tainted by the world if it were not for Christian friends.

In conclusion, cultivate *familiar* intimacy only with those who love good and God.

Doubtless there are circumstances which determine intimacies, such as rank, station, similarity of tastes. But one thing must be paramount to and modify them all—communion in God. Not in a sectarian spirit. We are not to form ourselves into a party with those who think as we do, and use the formulas that we do. But the spirit of the text requires us to feel strongly that there is a mighty gulf between those who love and those who do not love God. To the one class we owe civility, courtesy, kindness, even tenderness. It is only those who love the Lord who should find in our hearts a home.

XX.

RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."—Col. i. 21.

There are two, and only two kinds of goodness possible: the one is the goodness of those who have never erred; the other is the goodness of those who, having erred, have been recovered from their error. The first is the goodness of those who have never offended; the second is the goodness of those who, having offended, have been reconciled. In the infinite possibilities of God's universe, it may be that there are some who have attained the first of these kinds of righteousness. It may be that amongst the heavenly hierarchies there are those who have kept their first estate, whose performances have been commensurate with their aspirations, who have never known the wretchedness, and misery, and degradation of a Fall. But whether it be so or not is a matter of no practical importance to us. It may be a question speculatively interesting, but it is practically useless, for it is plain that such righteousness never can be ours. The only religion possible to man is the religion of penitence. The righteousness of man can not be the integrity of the virgin citadel which has never admitted the enemy; it can never be more than the integrity of the city which has been surprised and roused, and which, having expelled the invader with blood in the streets, has suffered great inward loss.

Appointed to these two kinds of righteousness there are two kinds of happiness. To the first is attached the blessing of entire ignorance of the stain, pollution, and misery of guilt —a blessed happiness: but it may be that it is not the greatest. To the happiness resulting from the other is added a greater strength of emotion; it may not have the calmness and peace of the first, but, perhaps, in point of intensity and fullness it is superior. It may be that the highest happiness can only be purchased through suffering: and the language of the Bible almost seems to authorize us to say, that the happiness of penitence is deeper and more blessed than the happiness of the righteousness that has never fallen could be.

There are two kinds of friendship—that which has never had a shock, and that which, after having been doubted, is at last made sure. The happiness of this last is perhaps the greater. Such seems to be the truth implied in the parable of the prodigal son: in the robe, and the ring, and the fatted calf, and the music, and dancing, and the rapture of a father's embrace: and once more, in those words of our Redeemer, "There is more joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." All these seem to tell of the immeasurable blessedness of penitence. And this, then, is our subject—the subject of reconciliation.

But the text divides itself into two branches:

I. Estrangement.
II. Reconciliation.

Estrangement is thus described: "You that were sometime" (that is, once) "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works:" in which there are three things. The first is the cause of the estrangement—wicked works; the second is the twofold order; and thirdly, the degree of that estrangement; first of all, mere alienation, afterwards hostility, enmity.

And, first of all, we consider the cause of the estrangement—"wicked works." Wicked works are voluntary deeds; they are not involuntary, but voluntary wrong. There is a vague way in which we sometimes speak of sin, in which it is possible for us to lose the idea of its guilt, and also to lose the idea of personal responsibility. We speak of sin sometimes as if it were a foreign disease introduced into the constitution: an imputed guilt arising from an action not our own, but of our ancestors. It is never so that the Bible speaks of sin. It speaks of it as wicked works, voluntary deeds, voluntary acts; that you, a responsible individual, have done acts which are wrong, of the mind, the hand, the tongue. The infant is by no means God's enemy; he may become God's enemy, but it can only be by voluntary action after conscience has been aroused. This our Master's words teach, when He tells us, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And such again is the mystery of Christian baptism. It tells us that the infant is not the child of the devil, but the child of God, the member of Christ, the heir of immortality. Sin, then, is a voluntary action. If you close your ear to the voice of God, if there be transgression of an inward law, if you sacrifice the heart and intellect to the senses, if you let ease or comfort be more dear to you than inward purity, if you leave duties undone, and give the body rule over the spirit—then you sin; for these are voluntary acts, these are wicked works.

The result of this is twofold. The first step is simply the step of alienation. There is a difference between alienation and hostility: in alienation we feel that God is our enemy, in hostility we look on ourselves as enemies to God. Alienation—"you that were sometime alienated"—was a more forcible expression in the apostle's time than it can be to us now. In our modern political society, the alien is almost on a level with the citizen. The difference now is almost nothing; in those days it was very great. The alien from the Jewish commonwealth had no right to worship with the Jews, and he had no power to share in the religious advantages of the Jews. The strength of the feeling that was existing against the alien you will perceive in that proverbial expression quoted by the Redeemer, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the *dogs*." In the Roman commonwealth, the word had a meaning almost stronger than this. To be an alien from the Roman commonwealth was to be separated from the authority and protection of the Roman law, and to be subjected to a more severe and degrading kind of penalty than that to which the Roman citizen was subject. The lash that might scourge the back of the alien offender might not fall on the back of a Roman citizen; and this it was that caused the magistrates of Philippi to tremble before their prisoners when the Apostle Paul said, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans." The lash was the alien's portion.

On reference to the second chapter of the Ephesians we find a conception given of alienation in the twelfth verse, where the apostle, speaking of the Ephesian converts, says, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." This, brethren, is alienation, exclusion — to have no place in this world, to be without lot or portion in the universe, to feel God as your enemy, to be estranged from Him, and banished from His presence: for the law of God acts as its own executioner within our bosoms, and there is no defying its sentence; from it there can be no appeal.

My Christian brethren, hell is not merely a thing hereafter, hell is a thing here; hell is not a thing banished to the far distance, it is ubiquitous as conscience. Wherever there is a worm of undying remorse, the sense of having done wrong, and a feeling of degradation, there is hell begun. And now respecting this. These words, "banishment from God," "alienation," though merely popular phrases, are expressions of a deep truth—it is true they are *but* popular expressions, for God is not wrath. You are not absolutely banished from God's presence. The Immutable changes not. He does not become angry or passionate whenever one of the eight hundred million inhabitants of this world commits a sin. And yet you will observe there is no other way in which we can express the truth but in these popular words. Take the illustration furnished to us last Sunday: it may be that it is the cloud and the mist that obscure the sun from us: the sun is not changed in consequence: it is a change in our atmosphere. But if the philosopher says to you, the sun in its splendor remains the same in the infinite space above, it is only an optical delusion which makes it appear lurid: to what purpose is that difference to you? to you it is lurid, to you it is dark. If you feel a darkness in your eye, coldness in your flesh, to what purpose, so far as feeling is concerned, is it that philosophy tells you the sun remains unchanged? And if it be that God in the heaven above remains love still, and that love warms not your heart; and that God is Light, in whom is no darkness at all, yet He shines not in your heart; my Christian brethren, let metaphysics and philosophy say what they will, these popular expressions are the true ones, after all; to you God *is* angry, from God you *are* banished, God's countenance *is* alienated from you.

The second step of this estrangement reaches a higher degree still; it is not merely that God is angry, but that we have become enemies to God. The illustration of the process of this we have seen in our common everyday life.

It is sometimes the case that strength of attachment set tles down to mere indifference, even changes to hatred. The first quarrel between friends is a thing greatly to be dreaded; it is often followed by the cessation of all correspondence, the interruption of that intercourse which has gone on so long. Well, a secret sense of self-blame and of wrong will intrude, and the only way in which we can escape it is by throwing the blame elsewhere. You see by degrees a cankered spot begins, and you look at it and touch it, and irritate it until the mortification becomes entire, and that which was at first alienation settles down into absolute animosity.

And such is it in the history of the alienation of the soul from God. The first step is to become indifferent, communion is interrupted, irregularity is begun, sin by degrees widens the breach, and then between the soul and God there is a great gulf fixed. Observe by what different ways different classes of character arrive at that. Weak characters have one way, and strong and bold characters have another. The weak mind throws the blame on circumstances; unable itself to subdue its own passions, it imagines there is some law in the universe that so ordains it; insists that the blame is on circumstances and destiny, and says, "If I am thus it is not my fault; if I am not to gratify my passions, why were they given to me? 'Why doth He find fault, for who hath resisted His will?'" And so these weak ones become by degrees fatalists; and it would seem, by their language, as if they were rather the patient victims of a cruel fate, the blame belonging not to them, but to God.

The way in which stronger and more vicious characters arrive at this enmity is different. Humiliation degrades, and degradation produces anger; you have but to go into the narrow and crowded streets of the most degraded portions of our metropolis, and there you will see the outcast turning with a look of defiance and hatred on respectability, merely because it is respectable: and this, brethren, many of us have seen, some of us have felt, in our relation towards God. That terrible demon voice stirs up within us, "Curse God and die." Haunted by furies, we stand, as it were, at bay, and dare to bid defiance to our Maker. Nothing so proves the original majesty of man as this terrible fact, that the creature can bid defiance to the Creator, and that man has it in him to become the enemy of God.

We pass on, in the next place, to consider the doctrine of reconciliation. We need scarcely define what is meant by reconciliation. To reconcile is to produce harmony where there was discord, unity where before there was variance.

We accept the apostle's definition of reconciliation. He says that "Christ hath made of twain one new man, so making peace." Now the reconciliation produced by Christ's atonement is fourfold:

In the first place, Christ hath reconciled man to God.
In the second place, He hath reconciled man to man.
In the third place, He hath reconciled man to himself.
And in the fourth place, He hath reconciled man to duty.

In the first place, the atonement of the Redeemer has reconciled man to God, and that by a twofold step: by exhibiting the character of God; and by that exhibition changing the character of man.

Brethren, the sacrifice of Christ was the voice of God proclaiming love. In this passage the apostle tells us that "Christ has reconciled us to God in the body of His flesh through death." We will not attempt to define what that sacrifice was—we will not philosophize upon it; for the more we philosophize the less we shall understand it. We are well content to take it as the highest exhibition and the noblest specimen of the law of our humanity—that great law, that there is no true blessedness without suffering, that every blessing we have comes through vicarious suffering. All that we have and enjoy comes from others' suffering. The life we enjoy is the result of maternal agony; our very bread is only obtained after the toil and anguish of suffering myriads; there is not one atom of the knowledge we possess now which has not, in some century of the world or other, been wrung out of Nature's secrets by the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the heart. The very peace which we are enjoying at this present day, how has that been purchased? By the blood of heroes whose bodies are now lying mouldering in the trenches of a thousand battle-fields.

This is the law of our humanity, and to this our Redeemer became subject—the law of life, self-surrender, without which reconciliation was impossible. And when the mind has comprehended this, that the sacrifice of Christ was the manifestation of the love of God, then comes the happy and blessed feeling of reconciliation. When a man has surrendered himself in humbleness and penitence to God, and the proud spirit of self-excuse has passed away: when the soul has opened itself to all His influences and known their power: when the saddest and bitterest part of suffering is felt no longer as the wrath of the Judge but as the discipline of a Father: when the love of God has melted the soul, and fused it into charity: then the soul is reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to the soul: for it is a marvellous thing how the change of feelings within us changes God to us, or rather those circumstances and things by which God becomes visible to us. His universe, once so dark, becomes bright: life, once a mere dull, dreary thing, "dry as summer dust," springs up once more into fresh luxuriance, and we feel it to be a divine and blessed thing.

We hear the voice of God as it was once heard in the garden of Eden whispering among the leaves: every sound, once so discordant, becomes music, the anthem of creation raised up, as it were, with everlasting hallelujahs to the eternal throne. Then it is that a man first knows his immortality, and the soul knows what is meant by infinitude and eternity; not that infinitude which can be measured by miles, nor that eternity which can be computed by hours; but the eternity of emotion. Let a man breathe but one hour of the charity of God, and feel but one true emotion of the reconciled heart, and then he knows forever what is meant by immortality, and he can understand the reality of his own.

The second consequence of the Redeemer's atonement is the reconciliation of man to man. Of all the apostles, none have perceived so strongly as St. Paul that the death of Christ is the reconciliation of man to man. Take that one single expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians—"For He is our peace who hath made both one." Observe, I pray you, the imagery with which he continues, "and hath broken down the middle wall of partition." The veil or partition wall between the court of the Jew and Gentile was broken asunder at the crucifixion. St. Paul saw in the death of Christ a spiritual resemblance to that physical phenomenon. Christ was not only born of woman, but under the law; and He could not become, as such, the Saviour of the world; but when death had taken place, and He was no longer the Jew, but the Man, no longer bound by limitations of time, and place, and country, then He became, as it were, a Spirit in the universe, no longer narrowed to place and to century, but universal, the Saviour of the Gentile as well as the Messiah of the Jew.

Therefore it was that St. Paul called the flesh of Christ a veil, and said the death of Christ was the taking down of "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile: and therefore it is by the sacrifice of Christ, and by that alone, man can be thus reconciled to man: and on no other possible basis can there be a brotherhood of the human race. You may try other ways; the men of the world have tried, and doubtless will go on trying, until they find that there is no other way than this. They may try by the principle of selfishness, the principle of moral rule, or the principle of civil authority. Let the political economist come forward with his principle of selfishness, and tell us that this is that by which alone the wealth of nations can accrue. He may get a nation in which there are a wealthy few and miserable many, but not a brotherhood of Christians. Suppose you *say*, men should love one another. Will that *make* them love one another? You may come forward with the crushing rule of political authority. Papal Rome has tried it and failed. She bound up the masses of the human race as a gigantic iceberg; but she could give only a temporary principle of unity and cohesion.

Therefore we turn back once more to the cross of Christ: through this alone we learn there is one God, one Father, one baptism, one Elder Brother in whom all can be brothers. But there is a something besides, a deeper principle still. We are told in this passage we can be reconciled to man by the body of Christ through death. And now, brethren, let us understand this. By the cross of Christ the apostle meant, reconciled by the spirit of the cross. And what was that spirit? It was the spirit of giving, and of suffering, and of loving, because He had suffered. Say what we will, love is not gratitude for favors which have been received. Why is the child more beloved by the parent than the parent by the child? Why did the Redeemer love His disciples more than they loved their Master? Benefits will not bind the affection; you must not expect that they will. You must suffer if you would love; you must remember that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The Apostle Paul felt this when he said reconciliation was produced through the body of the flesh of Christ by death.

Once more: man becomes by the Redeemer's atonement reconciled to himself.

That self-reconciliation is necessary, because we do not readily forgive ourselves. God may have forgiven us, but we can not forgive ourselves. You may obtain a remission of the past, but you can not forgive yourself and get back the feeling of self-respect, unity within, rest, by sitting still and believing that God has forgiven you, and that you have nothing left to look for? My brethren, there is a spirit of self-torture within us which is but a perversion of nobleness, a mistake of the true principle. When you have done wrong, you want to suffer. Love demands a sacrifice, and only by sacrifice can it reconcile itself to self. Then it is that the sacrifice of Christ replies to this, answers it, satisfies it, and makes it plain. The sacrifice of Christ was suffering in love, it was surrender to the will of God. The Apostle Paul felt this: when that Spirit was with him he was reconciled to himself. He says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If ever you devoted yourself to another's happiness or amelioration, so far and so long as you were doing that you forgave yourself; you felt the spirit of inward self-reconciliation; and what we want is only to make that perpetual, to make that binding which we do by fits and starts, to feel ourselves a living sacrifice, to know that we are, in our highest and best state, victims, offered up in love on the great altar of the kingdom of Christ, offered by Him to God as the first-fruits of His sacrifice; then we are reconciled to ourselves "by the blood of His flesh through death."

And lastly, through the atonement of the Redeemer, man becomes reconciled to duty. There is no discord more terrible than that between man and duty. There are few of us who fancy we have found our own places in this world; our lives, our partnerships, our professions, and our trades, are not those which we should have chosen for ourselves. There is an ambition within us which sometimes makes us fancy we are fit for higher things, that we are adapted for other and better things than those to which we are called. But we turn again to the cross of Christ, and the mystery of life be comes plain. The life and death of Christ are the reconciliation of man to the duties which he has to do. You can not study His marvellous life without perceiving that the whole of its details are uncongenial, mean, trivial, wretched circumstances—from which the spirit of a man revolts.

To bear the sneer of the Sadducee and the curse of the Pharisee; to be rejected by His family and friends; to be harassed by the petty disputes and miserable quarrels of His followers about their own *personal* precedence; to be treated by the government of His country as a charlatan and a demagogue; to be surrounded by a crowd of men, coming and going without sympathy; to retire and find His leisure intruded on and Himself pursued for ignoble ends—these were the circumstances of the Redeemer's existence here. Yet in these it was that the noblest life the world has ever seen was lived. He retired into the wilderness, and one by one put down all those visions that would have seduced Him from the higher path of duty; the vision of comfort which tempted Him to change the stones of this world into bread; the vision of ambition which tempted Him to make the kingdoms of this world His own by seeking good through evil;

the vision which tempted Him to distrust God, and become important by pursuing some strange, unauthorized way of His own, instead of following the way of submission to the will of God.

He ascended into the transfiguration mount, and there His Spirit converses with those of an elder dispensation, who had fought the fight before Him, Moses and Elias, and they spoke to Him of the triumph which He had to accomplish in death at Jerusalem. And He went down again with calm, serene, and transfigured faith, and there, at the very foot of the mount, He found His disciples engaged in some miserable squabble with the Scribes and the Pharisees about casting out a devil. And this life of His is the only interpretation of this life of ours—the reconciliation of our hearts with what we have to do. It is not by change of circumstances, but by fitting our spirits to the circumstances in which God has placed us, that we can be reconciled to life and duty. If the duties before us be not noble, let us ennoble them by doing them in a noble spirit; we become reconciled to life if we live in the Spirit of Him who reconciled the life of God with the lowly duties of servants.

And now one word in conclusion. The central doctrine of Christianity is the atonement. Take that away and you obliterate Christianity. If Christianity were merely the imitation of Christ, why then the imitation of any other good man, the Apostle Paul or John, might have become a kind of Christianity. If Christianity were merely martyrdom for truth, then, with the exception of a certain amount of degree, I see no difference between the death of Socrates and the death of Jesus Christ. But Christianity is more than this. It is the At-one-ment of the Soul. It is a reconciliation which the life and death of Christ have wrought out for this world —the reconciliation of man to God, the reconciliation of man to man, the reconciliation of man to self, and the reconciliation of man to duty.

XXI.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHARITY.

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."—1 Peter iv. 8.

THE grace of charity is exalted as the highest attainment of the Christian life by St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. These three men were very different from each other. Each was the type of a distinct order of character. And it is a proof that the Gospel is from God, and that the sacred writings are inspired from a single Divine source, that personal peculiarities are not placed foremost in them, but the foremost place is given by each to a grace which certainly was not the characteristic quality of all the three.

It is said in these modern days that Christianity was a system elaborated by human intellect. Men, they say, philosophized and thought it out. Christianity, it is maintained, like ethics, is the product of human reason. Now had this been true, we should have found the great teachers of Christianity each exalting that particular quality which was most remarkable in his own temperament. Just as the English honor truthfulness, and the French brilliancy, and the Hindoos subtlety, and the Italians finesse — and naturally, because these are predominant in themselves—we should have found the apostles insisting most strongly on those graces which grew most naturally in the soil of their own hearts.

Indeed, in a degree it is so. St. John's character was tender, emotional and contemplative. Accordingly, his writings exhibit the *feeling* of religion and the predominance of the inner life over the outer.

St. Paul was a man of keen intellect, and of soaring and aspiring thought which would endure no shackles on its freedom. And his writings are full of the two subjects we might have expected from this temperament. He speaks a great deal of intellectual gifts; very much of Christian liberty.

St. Peter was remarkable for personal courage. A soldier by nature: frank, free, generous, irascible. In his writings, accordingly, we find a great deal said about martyrdom.

But each of these men, so different from each other, exalts love above his own peculiar quality. It is very remarkable. Not merely does each call charity the highest, but each names it in immediate connection with his own characteristic virtue, and declares it to be more Divine.

St. John, of course, calls love the heavenliest. That we expect from St. John's character. "God is love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God;" "No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another God dwelleth in us."

But St. Paul expressly names it in contrast with the two feelings for which he was personally most remarkable, and, noble as they are, prefers it before them. First, in contrast with intellectual gifts. Thus, "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way: though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, it is nothing." Gifts are nothing in comparison of charity. Again, "We know that we all have knowledge: knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up." Knowledge is nothing in comparison.

Next, in comparison of that liberty which was so dear to him. Christian liberty permitted the converts the use of meats, and the disregard of days from which the strict law of Judaism had debarred them. Well, but there were cases in which the exercise of that liberty might hurt the scruples of some weak Christian brother, or lead him to imitate the example against his conscience. "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not *charitably*." Liberty said, You have a right to indulge; but Charity said, Refrain.

So that, according to St. Paul, there is one thing, and one only, to which Christian liberty must be sacrificed. That one is Christian love.

Now let us see how St. Peter does honor to the same grace, at the expense of that which we should have expected him to reckon the essential grace of manhood. Just before the text, we find the command, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." This is a sentence out of St. Peter's very heart. For in it we have prayer represented as the night-watch of a warrior, armed, who must not sleep his watch away. "Be sober, and watch"—the language of the soldier and the sentinel; words which remind you of him who drew his sword to defend his Master, and who in penitence remembered his own disastrous sleep when he was surprised as a sentry at his post. But immediately after this—"And, *above all things*, have fervent charity amongst yourselves." Sobriety, self-rule, manhood, courage, yes; but the life of them all, says St. Peter, the very crown of manhood, without which sobriety is but prudent selfishness, and courage is but brute instinct —is love.

Now I take that unanimity as a proof that the Gospel comes from one Living Source. How came St. Peter and St. John, so different from each other, and St. Paul, who had had almost no communion with either of them, to agree, and agree so enthusiastically, in this doctrine—love is over all and above all; above intellect, freedom, courage — unless there had streamed into the mind and heart of each one of them light from One Source, even from Him the deepest principle of whose being, and the law of whose life and death, were love?

We are to try, to-day, to understand this sentence of St. Peter. It tells us two things—

I. What charity is.
II. What charity does.

I. It is not easy to find one word in any language which rightly and adequately represents what Christ and His apostles meant by charity. All words are saturated with some imperfect meaning. Charity has become identified with alms-giving. Love is appropriated to one particular form of human affection, and that one with which self and passion mix inevitably. Philanthropy is a word too cold and negative.

Let us define Christian charity in two sentences: 1. The desire to give. 2. The desire to bless.

1. The desire to give. Let each man go deep into his own heart. Let him ask what that mysterious longing means which we call love, whether to man or God, when he has stripped from it all that is outside and accidental; when he has taken from it all that is mixed with it and perverts it. Not in his worst moments—but in his best, what did that yearning mean? I say it meant the desire to give. Not to get something, but to give something. And the mightier, the more irrepressible this yearning was, the more truly was his love love. To give—whether alms in the shape of money, bread, or a cup of cold water, or else self. But be sure, sacrifice, in some shape or other, is the impulse of love, and its restlessness is only satisfied and only gets relief in giving. For this, in truth, is God's own love, the will and the power to give. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Therefore God is the only blessed One, because He alone gives and never receives. The universe, teeming with life, is but God's love expressing itself. He creates life by the giving of Himself. He has redeemed the world by the giving of His Son. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The death of Christ was sacrifice. The life of God is one perpetual sacrifice, or giving of Himself and shedding forth of His Spirit. Else it would not be love.

And so, when the poor sinful woman gave her costly ointment with a large profuseness, Christ saw in it an evidence of love. "She loved much." For love gives.

2. The desire to bless. All love is this in a degree. Even weak and spurious love desires happiness of some kind for the creature that it loves. Almsgiving is often nothing more than indolence. We give to the beggar in the street, to save ourselves the trouble of finding out fitter objects. Still, indolent as it is, it is an indolent desire to prevent pain.

What we call philanthropy is often calm and cool—too calm and cool to waste upon it the name of charity. But it is a calm and cool desire that human happiness were possible. It is, in its weak way, a desire to bless. Now, the love whereof the Bible speaks, and of which we have but one perfect personification—viz., in the life of Christ—is the desire for the best and true blessedness of the being loved. It wishes the well-being of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit; but chiefly spirit.

Therefore, He fed the poor with bread. Therefore, He took His disciples into the wilderness to rest when they were weary. Therefore, "He gave Himself for us, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness." For the kingdom of God is not bread only and repose, which constitute physical happiness, but goodness, too; for that is blessedness.

And the highest love is, therefore, the desire to make men good and Godlike; it may wish, as a subordinate attainment, to turn this earth into a paradise of comfort by mechanical inventions; but far above that, to transform into a kingdom of God, the domain of love, where men cease to quarrel and to envy, and to slander and to retaliate. "This, also, we wish," said St. Paul, "even your perfection."

Concerning this charity we remark two points: 1. It is characterized as fervent. 2. It is capable of being cultivated.

1. "Fervent." Literally intense, unremitting, unwearied. Now, there is a feeble sentiment which wishes well to all so long as it is not tempted to wish them ill, which does well to those who do well to them. But this, being merely sentiment, will not last. Ruffle it and it becomes vindictive. In contrast with that, St. Peter calls Christ's spirit, which loves those who hate it, "fervent" charity, which does not tire, and can not be worn out; which loves its enemies, and does good to them that hate it. For Christian love is not the dream of a philosopher, sitting in his study, and benevolently wishing the world were better than it is, congratulating himself, perhaps, all the time on the superiority shown by

himself over other less amiable natures. Injure one of these beaming sons of good-humor, and he bears malice: deep, unrelenting, refusing to forgive. But give us the man who, instead of retiring to some small, select society, or rather association, where his own opinions shall be reflected, can mix with men where his sympathies are unmet, and his tastes are jarred, and his views traversed, at every turn, and still can be just, and gentle, and forbearing.

Give us the man who can be insulted and not retaliate; meet rudeness and still be courteous; the man who, like the Apostle Paul, buffeted and disliked, can yet be generous, and make allowances, and say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." That is "fervent charity."

2. Again, it is capable of being cultivated. We assume that, simply because it is enjoined. When an apostle says, "*Have* fervent charity among yourselves," it is plain that it would be a cruel mockery to command men to attain it if they could do nothing towards the attainment. It would be the same insult as saying to the deformed, "be beautiful." For it is wanton cruelty to command where obedience is impossible.

How shall we cultivate this charity?

Now, I observe first, love can not be produced by a direct action of the soul upon itself. You can not love by a resolve to love. That is impossible as it is to move a boat by pressing it from within. The force with which you press on is exactly equal to that with which you press back. The reaction is exactly equal to the action. You force backward exactly as much as you force on. There are religious persons who, when they feel their affections cooled, strive to warm them by self-reproach, or by unnatural effort, or by the excitement of what they call revivals—trying to work themselves into a state of warm affection. There are others who hope to make feeble love strong by using strong words. Now, for all this they pay a price. Effort of heart is followed by collapse. Excitement is followed by exhaustion. They will find that they have cooled exactly in that proportion in which they warmed, and at least as fast.

It is as impossible for a man to work himself into a state of genuine fervent love as it is for a man to inspire himself. Inspiration is a breath and a life coming from without. Love is a feeling roused not from ourselves, but from something outside ourselves. There are, however, two methods by which we may cultivate this charity.

1. By doing acts which love demands. It is God's mer

ciful law that feelings are increased by acts done on principle. If a man has not the feeling in its warmth, let him not wait till the feeling comes. Let him act with such feeling as he has; with a cold heart if he has not got a warm one; it will grow warmer while he acts. You may love a man merely because you have done him benefits, and so become interested in him, till interest passes into anxiety, and anxiety into affection. You may acquire courtesy of feeling at last, by cultivating courteous manner. The dignified politeness of the last century forced man into a kind of unselfishness in small things, which the abrupter manners of to-day will never teach. And say what men will of rude sincerity, those old men of urbane manners were kinder at heart with real good will, than we are with that rude bluffness which counts it a loss of independence to be courteous to any one. Gentleness of manner had some influence on gentleness of heart.

So, in the same way, it is in things spiritual. If our hearts are cold, and we find it hard to love God and be affectionate to man, we must begin with duty. Duty is not Christian liberty, but is the first step toward liberty. We are free only when we love what we are to do, and those to whom we do it. Let a man begin in earnest with—I ought—he will end, by God's grace, if he persevere, with the free blessedness of—I will. Let him force himself to abound in small offices of kindliness, attention, affectionateness, and all those for God's sake. By-and-by he will feel them become the habit of his soul. By-and-by, walking in the conscientiousness of refusing to retaliate when he feels tempted, he will cease to wish it: doing good and heaping kindness on those who injure him, he will learn to love them. For he has spent a treasure there: "And where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

2. The second way of cultivating Christian love is by contemplating the love of God. You can not move the boat from within; but you may obtain a purchase from without. You can not create love in the soul by force from within itself; but you may move it from a point outside itself. God's love is the point from which to move the soul. Love begets love. Love believed in, produces a return of love: we can not love because we must. "Must" kills love; but the law of our nature is that we love in reply to love. No one ever yet hated one whom he believed to love him truly. We may be provoked by the pertinacity of an affection which asks what we can not give; but we can not hate the true love which does not ask but gives. Now this is the

central truth of Christ's Gospel: "We love Him because He first loved us;" "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" "God is love."

It is the one, almost only struggle of religious life, to believe this. In spite of all the seeming cruelties of this life; in spite of the clouded mystery in which God has shrouded Himself; in spite of pain and the stern aspect of human life, and the gathering of thicker darkness and more solemn silence round the soul as life goes on, simply to believe that God is love, and to hold fast to that, as a man holds on to a rock with a desperate grip when the salt surf and the driving waves sweep over him and take the breath away—I say that is the one fight of Christian life, compared with which all else is easy: when we believe that, human affections are easy. It is easy to be generous, and tolerant, and benevolent, when we are sure of the heart of God, and when the little love of this life, and its coldnesses, and its unreturned affections, are more than made up to us by the certainty that our Father's love is ours. But when we lose sight of that, though but for a moment, the heart sours, and men seem no longer worth the loving: and wrongs are magnified, and injuries can not be forgiven, and life itself drags on, a mere death in life. A man may doubt any thing and every thing, and still be blessed, provided only he holds fast to that conviction. Let all drift from him like sea-weed on life's ocean. So long as he reposes on the assurance of the eternal faithfulness of the Eternal Charity, his spirit at least can not drift. There are moments, I humbly think, when we understand those triumphant words of St. Paul, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

II. What charity does.

It covereth a multitude of sins.

Now the only question is, *whose* sins does charity cover? Is it that the sins of the charitable man are covered by his charity in God's sight? Or is it the sins of others over which charity throws a mantle so as not to see them?

Some wise and good men have said the first. Love obliterates sin in the sight of God; and assuredly it *might* be this that St. Peter meant. No doubt whole years of folly we outlive "in His unerring sight, who measures life by love." Recollect our Master's own words—"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her: *for* she loved much."

Nevertheless, that does not seem to be the meaning of this passage. A large number of deep thinkers have been convinced that St. Peter is here describing Christianity, and the description which he gives of it as most characteristic is, that it hides out of sight, and refuses to contemplate, a multitude of sins which malevolence would delight to see. It throws a veil over them and covers them. At all events, this is true of Christian charity: and we shall consider the passage in that sense to-day.

There are three ways, at least, in which love covers sin.

1. In refusing to see small faults. Every man has his faults, his failings, peculiarities, eccentricities. Every one of us finds himself crossed by such failings of others, from hour to hour. And if he were to resent them all, or even notice all, life would be intolerable. If for every outburst of hasty temper, and for every rudeness that wounds us in our daily path, we were to demand an apology, require an explanation, or resent it by retaliation, daily intercourse would be impossible. The very science of social life consists in that gliding tact which avoids contact with the sharp angularities of character, which does not argue about such things, does not seek to adjust or cure them all, but covers them, as if it did not see.

Exceedingly wise was that conduct of the Roman pro consul at Corinth which we read of in the Acts. The Jews, with Sosthenes at their head, had brought a charge of heresy against the Christians, and tried it at the Roman law. Gallio perceived that it was a vexatious one, and dismissed it; drove them from the judgment-seat. Whereupon the Greeks, indignant at the paltry virulence of the accusation, took Sosthenes, in his way from the judgment-seat, and beat him even in Gallio's presence. It is written, "Gallio cared for none of these things." He took no notice. He would not see. It was doubtless illegal and tumultuous, a kind of contempt of court—a great offense in Roman law. But Gallio preferred permitting a wholesome outburst of healthy indignation, to carrying out the law in its letter. For he knew that in that popular riot human nature was throwing off an incubus. It was a kind of irregular justice, excusable because of its provocation. And so Gallio would not see. He *covered* the transgression in a wise and willful blindness.

That which the Roman magistrate did from wise policy, the Christian spirit does in a diviner way. It throws over such things a cloak of love. It knows when it is wise not to see. That microscopic distinctness in which all faults appear to captious men, who are forever blaming, dissecting, complaining, disappears in the large, calm gaze of love. And oh! it is this spirit which our Christian society lacks, and which we shall never get till we begin each one with his own heart. What we want is, in one word, that graceful tact and Christian art which can bear and forbear.

That was a rude, "unpardonable" insult offered by Peter to his Master when he denied Him. In His hour of trial, he refused to seem even to know Him. We should have said, I will never forget that. The Divine charity covered all. Ask ye how? "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep."

2. Love covers sin by making large allowances. In all evil there is a "soul of goodness." Most evil is perverted good. For instance, extravagance is generosity carried to excess. Revenge is sometimes a sense of justice which has put no restraint upon itself. Woman's worst fault is perverted self-sacrifice. Incaution comes from innocence. Now there are some men who see all the evil, and never trace, never give themselves the trouble of suspecting the root of goodness out of which it sprung. There are others who love to go deep down, and see *why* a man came to do wrong, and whether there was not some excuse, or some redeeming cause: in order that they may be just. Just, as "God is just, *and* the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Not as the passage is sometimes quoted—just, and *yet* the justifier; as if there were some difficulty in reconciling God's justice and God's mercy: but just *and* the justifier, just and therefore the justifier. Merciful because just.

Now human life, as it presents itself to these two different eyes, the eye of one who sees only evil, and that of him who sees evil as perverted good, is two different things. Take an instance. Not many years ago, a gifted English writer presented us with a history of ancient Christianity. To his eye the early Church presented one great idea, almost only one. He saw corruption written everywhere. In the history of the ascetics, of the nuns, of the hermits, of the early bishops, he saw nothing noble, nothing aspiring. Everywhere the one dark spectacle of the Man of Sin. In public and in private life, in theology and practice, within and without, everywhere pollution. Another historian, a foreigner, has written the history of the same times, with an intellect as piercing to discover the very first germ of error, but with a calm, large heart, which saw the good out of which the error sprung, and loved to dwell upon it, delighting to trace the lineaments of God, and discern His Spirit working where another could see only the spirit of the devil. And you rise from the two books with different views of the world; from the one, considering the world as a devil's world, corrupting towards destruction; from the other, notwithstanding all, feeling triumphantly that it is God's world, and that His Spirit works gloriously below it all. You rise from the study with different feelings: from the one, inclined to despise your species; from the other, able joyfully to understand in part why God so loved the world, and what there is in man to love, and what there is, even in the lost, to seek and save.

Now that is the "charity which covereth a multitude of sins."

It understands by sympathy. It is that glorious nature which has affinity with good under all forms, and loves to find it, to believe in it, and to see it. And therefore such men—God's rare and best ones—learn to make allowances; not from weak sentiment, which calls wrong right, but from that heavenly charity which sees right lying at the root of wrong. So the Apostle Paul learned to be candid even towards himself. "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." His very bigotry and persecuting spirit could be justified by God, and by men who see like God. It was wrong, very wrong; he did not palliate it; he felt that it had made him "the chief of sinners," but he discerned that his had been zeal directed wrongly—not hate, but inverted love.

So too, over the dark grave of Saul the suicide, the love of friendship could shed one ray of hope. He who remembered of Saul only his nobler nature and his earlier days, when his desolate character was less ambiguous—the man after God's own heart—whose love refused to part with the conviction that that light which was from God was not quenched forever, though it had set in clouds and thick darkness—dared to say, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." Would you or I have dared to hope over a grave like Saul's? So, too, over the grave of the prophet whose last act was disobedience, love still dared to hope, and the surviving prophet remembered only that he had shared the gift of prophecy with himself. "Alas, my *brother!*" A sinner, who had died in sin, but as our own burial service nobly dares to say, in the hope of intense charity, "To rest in Thee, as our hope is this our brother doth." And so, lastly, in the blackest guilt the earth has seen—in memory of which we, in our Christian charity, after eighteen hundred years, brand the descendant Jews with a curse, which is only slowly disappearing from our minds—there was one Eye which could discern a ground on which to make allowance, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Let us dismiss from our minds one false suspicion. The man who can be most charitable is not the man who is himself most lax. Deep knowledge of human nature tells us it is exactly the reverse. He who shows the rough and thorny road to heaven is he who treads the primrose path himself. Be sure that it is the severe and pitiless judge and censor of others' faults on whom, at a venture, you may most safely fix the charge, "Thou art the man!" I know not why, but unrelenting severity proves guilt rather than innocence. How much purity was proved by David's sentence of an imaginary criminal to death? How much by the desire of those Pharisees to stone the woman taken in adultery? Convicted by their own consciences, they went out one by one; yet they had longed to stone her. No: be sure you must be free from sin in proportion as you would judge with the allowance and the charity of Christ Jesus. "Tempted in all points, yet without sin." "*Wherefore* also, He is a merciful High-priest."

3. Lastly, charity can tolerate even intolerance. Let no man think that he can be tolerant or charitable as a matter of self-indulgence. For real charity and real toleration he must pay a price. So long as they are merely negative—so long as they mean only the permission to every one to think his own thoughts and go his own way—the world will bear them. But so soon as charity becomes action, and toleration becomes earnest, basing themselves on a principle, even this —the conviction that at the root of many an error there lies a truth, and within much evil a central heart of goodness, and below unwise and even opposite forms, the same essential meaning—so soon charity and toleration exasperate the world secular, or so-called religious.

For instance, if, with St. Paul, you affirm, "He that observeth the day, observeth it to the Lord; and he that observeth not the day, to the Lord he observeth it not," tolerating both the observance and the non-observance, when you perceive the desire of doing God's will existing in both, you can not avoid the charge of being careless about the question of the sanctities of a day of rest. Or if, with St. Paul, you say of some superstitious idolatry, that men ignorantly worship God in it, their worship being true, their form false—you can not avoid the stigma of seeming for the time to be tending to that idolatry. Or if, with the Son of God, you recognize the enthusiasm of nature, which passion had led astray in devious paths, you can not escape the imputation of being "a friend of publicans and sinners." This is the price which a man must pay for charity. His Master could not escape the price, nor can he.

And then comes the last and most difficult lesson of love to make allowances even for the uncharitable. For surely below all that uncharitableness which is so common, there is often a germ of the life of love; and beneath that intolerance, which may often wound ourselves, a loving and a candid eye may discern zeal for God. Therefore St. Paul saw even in the Jews, his bitterest foes, that "they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." And therefore St. Stephen prayed, with his last breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Earth has not a spectacle more glorious or more fair to show than this—love tolerating intolerance; charity covering, as with a veil, even the sin of the lack of charity.

XXII.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

"And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."—Luke xvi. 8, 9.

There is at first sight a difficulty in the interpretation of this parable; apparently there is a commendation of evil by Christ. We see a bad man is held up for Christian imitation. Now let us read the parable.

"And He said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I can not dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

The difficulty we have spoken of passes away when we have learned to distinguish the essential aim of the parable from its ornament or drapery. There is in every parable the main scope, and the ornament or drapery. Sometimes, if we press too closely the drapery in which the aim and intention of the parable is clothed, we get quite the contrary of our Redeemer's meaning. For example, in the parable of the unjust judge there is the similarity, that both God and the unjust judge yield to importunate prayer; but there is this difference, that the judge does it from weariness, and God from love. The judge grants the widow's request, lest, he says, "by her continual coming she weary me;"—and God answers the petitions of His people from love: and encourages earnestness and sincerity in prayer because it brings man nearer to Him, elevating and ennobling him, while it makes him feel his entire dependence on God.

So here in this parable: it is the lord—it is not Christ, but the master—who commended the unjust steward. And he did so, not because he had acted honorably, faithfully, gratefully, but because he had acted *wisely*. He takes the single point of prudence, foresight, forecast.

Let us consider the possibility of detaching a single quality from a character, and viewing it separately.

So do we speak in everyday life. We quote a passage admiringly, from an infidel writer—for example, Gibbon; but thereby we do not approve his infidelity. We may admire the manly bearing of a prisoner in the dock or on the scaffold, while we reprobate the crime which brought him there. We may speak enthusiastically of a great philosopher; we do not therefore say he is a great man, or a good man. Perhaps we are charmed by a tale of successful robbery; we wonder at its ingenuity, its contrivance, feel even a kind of respect for the man who could so contrive it: but no man who thus relates it is understood to recommend felony. We admire the dexterity of a juggler *as* dexterity.

So it was with this parable of Christ. He fastened on a single point, excluding all other considerations. The man had planned, he had seen difficulties, overcome them, marked out his path, held to it steadily, crowned himself with success. So far he is an example. The way in which he used his power of forecasting may have been bad; but forecast itself is good. Our subject to-day includes:

I. The wisdom of this world.
II. The pattern of Christian consistency.

I. The wisdom of this world. There are three classes of men. Those who believe that one thing is needful, and choose the better part, who believe in and live for eternity; —these are not mentioned here: those who believe in the world and live for it; and those who believe in eternity, and half live for the world.

Forethought for self made the steward ask himself, "What shall I do?" Here is the thoughtful, contriving, sagacious man of the world. In the affairs of this world, the man who does not provide for self, if he enter into competition with the world on the world's principles, soon finds himself thrust aside; he will be put out. It becomes necessary to jostle and struggle in the great crowd if he would thrive. With him it is not, first the kingdom of God; but first, what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and wherewithal shall he be clothed.

Note the kind of superiority in this character that is commended. There are certain qualities which really do elevate a man in the scale of being. He who pursues a plan steadily is higher than he who lives by the hour. You can not but respect such a one. The value of self-command and self-denial is exemplified in the cases of the diplomatist who masters his features while listening; the man of pleasure who is prudent in his pleasures; the man of the world who keeps his temper and guards his lips. How often, after speaking hastily the thought which was uppermost, and feeling the cheek burn, you have looked back in admiration on some one who held his tongue even though under great provocation to speak.

Look at some hard-headed, hard-hearted man, with a front of brass, carrying out his worldly schemes with a settled plan, and a perseverance which you perforce must admire. There may be nothing very exalted in his aim, but there is something very marvellous in the enduring, patient, steady pursuit of his object.

You see energies of the highest order are brought into play. It is not a being of mean powers that the world has beguiled, but a mind far-reaching, vast; throwing immortal powers on things of time; on a scheme, perhaps, which breaks up like a cloud-phantom or melts like an ice-palace.

It is a marvellous spectacle—a man reaching forward to secure a habitation, a home, that will last. A man counting his freehold more his own than the pension for life: sagacious, meeting with entire success: the success which always attends consistency in any pursuit. If a tradesman resolve to save and be frugal, barring accidents, he will realize a competency or a fortune. If you make it your business to please, you will be welcome in society. So we find it in this parable

This man, one of the world, contrived to secure for himself a home. And the children of this world are consistent, and force the world to yield them a home. It is no use saying the people of the world are not happy.

I shall now endeavor to explain this parable. The term "steward" is not to be taken exactly in its modern meaning. The tenants paid their rents, not in money, but in kind, that is, in produce, and the rent was a certain proportion of the crop, and would therefore vary according to the harvest. Say, for illustration, the landlord—here called "the lord"—received as rent the tenth part of the crop; then, if the produce of an olive-yard was a thousand measures of oil, "the lord" was entitled to a hundred measures. And similarly in the case of an arable farm, a rent of a hundred measures of wheat would represent a crop of a thousand measures. According to the parable, it appears that it depended on the good faith of the tenant to state truly the amount gathered in; and against false returns the chief check was provided in the steward. If he acquiesced in the deception, there was generally no detection or check. We read in this case he permitted the bill to be taken, and an account given, in the one instance of eight hundred, in the other, of five hundred instead of a thousand measures. Thus he got gratitude from the tenants, who considered him a benevolent man, and counted his expulsion an injustice. We have here a specimen of the world's benevolence and the world's gratitude. Let us do the world justice. Gratitude is given profusely. Help a man to build his fortune, and you will win gratitude.

The steward got commendation from his lord for his worldly wisdom. Such is the wisdom of this world—wise in its contriving selfishness; wise in its masterly superiority; wise in its adaptation of means to ends; wise in its entire success.

But the success is only in their generation, and their wisdom is only for their generation. If this world be all, it is wise to contrive for it and live for it. But if not, then consider—the word is, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be that thou hast gotten?"

II. In contrast with the wisdom of the children of this world, the Redeemer shows the inconsistencies of the children of light. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

This is evidently not true of all. There have been men who have given their bodies to be burned for the truth's sake; men who have freely sacrificed this present world for the next. To say that the wisest of the sons of this world is half as wise as they, were an insult to the sanctifying Spirit.

But "children of light" is a wide term. There is a difference between life and light. To have light is to perceive truth and know duty. To have life is to be able to live out truth and to perform duty. Many a man has clear light who has not taken hold of life. Many a man is the child of light who does not walk as the child of life.

So far as a man feels that eternity is long, time short, so far he is a child of light. So far as he believes the body nothing in comparison with the soul, the present in comparison with the future; so far as he has felt the power of sin, and the sanctifying power of the death of Christ; so far as he comprehends the character of God as exhibited in Jesus Christ—he is a child of light.

Now the accusation is, that in his generation he does not walk so wisely as the child of the world does in his. The children of the world believe that this world is of vast importance. They are consistent with their belief, and live for it. Out of it they manage to extract happiness. In it they contrive to find a home.

To be a child of light implies duty as well as privilege. It is not enough to have the light, if we do not "walk in the light." "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

And to hold high principles and live on low ones is Christian inconsistency. We are all more or less inconsistent. There is no man whose practice is not worse than his profession. No one who does not live below his own standard. But absolute inconsistency is, when a man's life, taken as a whole, is in opposition to his acknowledged views and principles. If a man say that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and is forever receiving, scarcely ever giving, he is inconsistent. If he profess that to please God is the only thing worth living for, and his plans, and aims, and contrivances are all to please men, he is wise for the generation of the children of the world; for the generation of the "children of light" he is not wise. See, then, the contrast.

The wisdom of the steward consisted in forecasting. He felt that his time was short, and he lost not a moment. Every time he crossed a field it was with the feeling, This is no longer mine. Every time he left his house he felt, I shall soon leave it to come back no more. Every time he went into a tenant's cottage he felt, The present is all that may be given me to make use of this opportunity. Therefore, he says with dispatch, "Take thy bill, and write down."

Now the want of Christian wisdom consists in this, that our stewardship is drawing to a close, and no provision is made for an eternal future. We are all stewards. Every day, every age of life, every year, gives us superintendence over something which we have to use, and the use of which tells for good or evil on eternity.

Childhood and manhood pass. The day passes: and, as its close draws near, the Master's voice is heard—"Thou mayest be no longer steward." And what are all these outward symbols but types and reminders of the darker, longer night that is at hand? One by one, we are turned out of all our homes. The summons comes. The man lies down on his bed for the last time; and then comes that awful moment, the putting down the extinguisher on the light, and the grand rush of darkness on the spirit.

Let us now consider our Saviour's application of this parable. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

There are two expressions to be explained.

1. "Mammon of unrighteousness." Mammon is the name of a Syrian god, who presided over wealth. Mammon of unrighteousness means the god whom the unrighteous worship—wealth.

It is not necessarily gold. Any wealth; wealth being weal or well-being. Time, talents, opportunity, and authority, all are wealth. Here the steward had influence.

It is called the mammon of unrighteousness, because it is ordinarily used, not well, but ill. Power corrupts men. Riches harden more than misfortune.

2. "Make friends of." This is an ambiguous expression. Those who know it to be so scarcely are aware how widely it is misunderstood. To make friends of, has, in English, two meanings. To make friends of a man, in our idiom, is to convert him into our ally. We meet with those who imagine that the command is to make riches our friends instead of our enemies.

But the other meaning is "of," *i. e.*, out of, by the use of, to create friends—in a word, to use these goods of time in such a way as to secure eternal well-being.

"Make to yourselves friends." I will explain "friends" as a home. There may seem to be great legality in this injunction.

Yet on this subject the words of Scripture are very strong "Sell that thou hast, and give unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;" "Provide yourselves bags that wax not old; a treasure in the heavens, that fadeth not away;" "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Do not be afraid of the expression. Let it stand in all its bold truthfulness. Goodness done in Christ secures blessedness. A cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward.

Merit in these things there is none. Oh, the man who knows the torment of an evil heart, and the man who is striving to use his powers wisely, is not the man to talk of merit in the sight of God. There is no truth more dear to our hearts than this—not by merit, but by grace, does heaven become ours.

But let us put it in another way. Wise acts, holy and unselfish deeds, secure friends. Wherever the steward went he found a friend. The acts of his beneficence were spread over the whole of his master's estate. Go where he would, he would receive a welcome. In this way our good actions become our friends.

And if it be no dream which holy men have entertained, that on this regenerated earth the risen spirits shall live again in glorified bodies, then it were a thing of sublime anticipation, to know that every spot hallowed by the recollection of a deed done for Christ, contains a recollection which would be a friend. Just as the patriarchs erected an altar when they felt God to be near, till Palestine became dotted with these memorials, so would earth be marked by a good man's life with those holiest of all friends, the remembrance of ten thousand little nameless acts of piety and love.

Lastly, they are *everlasting* habitations.

If the children of the world be right, it is not all well with them; but if the children of light be right, it is well everlastingly.

Nothing is eternal but that which is done for God and others. That which is done for self dies. Perhaps it is not wrong: but it perishes. You say it is pleasure, well—enjoy it. But joyous recollection is no longer joy. That which ends in self is mortal; that alone which goes out of self into God lasts forever.

XXIII.

THE ORPHANAGE OF MOSES.

A SERMON PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE ORPHAN SOCIETY

"And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it."—Exod. ii. 6–9.

This is the account given of the discovery of a foundling orphan. Moses was an orphan — ὀρφανὸς, bereaved; ordinarily it means one bereaved by death. But it matters not whether it is by death or otherwise; it is truly an orphan if it be in any manner deprived of a parent's care. Here the child Moses was not bereaved by death, but by political circumstances.

In the book from whence our text is taken, we are told that three laws were enacted against the liberties of Israel:

1. To keep down the population the political economy of those days devised, as a preventive check, the slaughter of the males.

2. To prevent their acquiring any political importance, the officers set over them were Egyptians. No Israelite was eligible to any office—not even as a taskmaster.

3. To prevent their acquiring knowledge, they were prohibited from the slightest leisure: their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in brick and mortar.

No penal statutes were ever more complete than these. If any penal statutes could have prevented the growth of this injured nation, these must have succeeded. Numerically limited, rendered politically insignificant, and intellectually feeble, the slavery of Israel was complete.

But wherever governments enact penal laws which are against the laws of God, those governments or nations are, by the sure and inevitable process of revolution, preparing for themselves destruction. As when you compress yielding water, it burst at last.

Pharaoh's laws were against all the laws of Nature, or, more properly speaking, against the laws of God: and Nature was slowly working against Pharaoh. He had made God his enemy.

Against these laws of Pharaoh a mother's heart revolted. She hid her child for three months. Disobedience to this Egyptian law, we read, was faith in God—so says the Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

At last concealment was no longer possible, and the mother placed her child in an ark among the reeds of the river Nile. And there a foundling orphan he lay, who was to be the future emancipator and lawgiver of Israel.

In order to understand these verses, I divide them into two branches:

I. The claims of the orphan.
II. The orphan's education.

And first. By apparent accident, if there be such a thing in this world of God's, the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river to wash, and, among the reeds she saw the chest in which lay the child.

Now the first claim put forward on her compassion was the claim of infancy.

The chest was opened. The princess "saw the child." That single sentence contains an argument. It was an appeal to the woman's heart. It mattered not that she was a princess, nor that she belonged to the proudest class of the most exclusive nation in the world. Rank, caste, nationality, all melted before the great fact of womanhood. She was a woman, and before her lay an outcast child.

Now, let us observe, that feeling which arose here was spontaneous. She did not feel compassion because it was her duty so to feel, but because it was her nature. The law of Egypt forbade her to feel so for a Hebrew child.

We commit a capital error when we make feeling a matter of command. To make feelings a subject of law destroys their beauty and spontaneity.

When we say ought—that a woman ought to feel so and so—we state a fact, not a command. We say that it is her nature, and that she is unnatural if she does not. There is something wrong—her nature is perverted. But no command can *make* her feel thus or thus. Law, applied to feeling, only makes hypocrites.

God has provided for humanity by a plan more infallible than system, by implanting feeling in our natures. It was a heathen felt thus.

Do not fancy that Christianity created these feelings of tenderness and compassion by commanding them. Christianity declares them, commands them, and sanctions them, because they belong to man's unadulterated nature. Christianity acknowledges them, stamps them with the divine seal; but they existed before, and were found even among the Egyptians and Assyrians. What Christianity did for all these feelings was exactly what the creation of the sun, as given in the Mosaic account, did for the light then existing. There was light before, but the creation of the sun was the gathering all the scattered rays of light into one focus. Christian institutions, asylums, hospitals, are only the reduction into form of feelings that existed before.

So it is, that all that heathenism held of good and godlike, Christianity acknowledges and adopts—centralizes. It is human—Christian—ours.

2. Consider the degradation of this child's origin. "This is one of the Hebrews' children." The exclusiveness of the Egyptian social system was as strong as that of the Hindoo. There was no intermixture between caste and caste—between priest and merchant. This child was, moreover, a Hebrew—a slave—an alien—reckoned a hereditary enemy, and to be crushed.

In these rigid feelings of caste distinction the princess was brought up. The voice of society said, It is but a Hebrew. The mightier voice of nature—no, of God—spake within her, and said, It is a human being—bone of your bone, and sharing the same life.

That moment the princess of Egypt escaped from the trammels of time-distinctions and temporary narrowness, and stood upon the rock of the Eternal. So long as the feeling lasted, she breathed the spirit of that kingdom in which there is "neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free." So long as the feeling lasted, she breathed the atmosphere of Him who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

She was animated by His Spirit who came to raise the abject, to break the bond of the oppressor. She felt as He felt, when she recognized that the very degradation of the child was a claim upon her royal compassion.

3. The last reason we find for this claim was its unprotected state—it wept. Those tears told of a conscious want—the felt want of a mother's arms. But they suggested to the Egyptian princess the remembrance of a

danger of which the child was unconscious—helpless exposure to worse evils—famine; the Nile flood; the crocodile. And the want of which the exposed child was conscious was far less than the danger of which it was unconscious.

Such is the state of orphanage. Because it is unprotected, it is therefore exposed to terrible evils. There are worse evils than the Nile, the crocodile, or starvation.

Suppose the child had lived. Then, as a boy in the hands of a taskmaster or slave-driver, he would have become callous, hard, and vicious, with every feeling of tenderness dried up. Nothing can replace a parent's tenderness. It is not for physical support merely that parents are given us, but for the formation of the heart. He wept now; but the fountain of the orphan's tears would have been withered and dried up, and instead of the tender man which he afterwards became, he would have become a hard-hearted slave.

Let us suppose, again, the case of a girl orphaned. Then you have the danger infinitely multiplied. There would have been no one in all the land of Egypt to redress the wrongs done to a Hebrew maiden. There are men in this world to whom, putting religion out of the question even, the very fact of wanting protection is cause sufficient for them to render protection. There are men to whom defenselessness is its own all-sufficient plea: there are men in whose presence the woman and the orphan, just because they are unshielded by any care, are protected more than they could be by any laws.

But remember, I pray you, that there is another spirit in the world—the spirit of oppression, and even worse; the spirit against which Jewish prophets rose to the height of a divine eloquence when they pleaded the cause of the fatherless and the widow; that spirit which in our own day makes the daughter of the poor man less safe than the daughter of the rich; that spirit of seduction, than which there is nothing more cowardly, more selfish, more damnable. For alas! it is true that to say that a girl is unprotected, fatherless, and poor, is almost equivalent to saying that she will fall into sin.

II. We pass on now to consider the orphan's education; and first I notice that it was a suggestion from another.

The princess felt compassion, and so far was in the state of one who has warm feelings, but does not know how to do good. Brought up in a court, born to be waited on, nursed in luxury, ignorant of life and how the poor lived, those feelings might have remained helpless feelings.

Then, in the providence of God, one stood by who offered a suggestion how she might benefit the child, "Shall I go and call a nurse?" In other words, she suggested that it would be a princely and noble thing for Pharaoh's daughter to adopt and educate it.

And now observe the value of such a suggestion: what we want is not feeling—emotions are common, feelings superabound. In the educated classes, feeling is extremely refined, but is much occupied with imaginary and unreal troubles; and the reason why, with such warm feelings so little good is done, is that we want the suggestion how to do it.

Observe how differently the Bible treats this, from what the painter or the novelist would have done. A painter would have shown the majesty and beauty of the royal actor. A romance would have given a touching history of womanly sentiment. But the Bible, being a real book, says little of the emotion—merely mentions it—and passes on to the act to which the feeling was meant to lead.

Brethren, we often make a mistake here; we are proud of our emotions, of our refined feeling, of our quick sensibilities; but remember, I pray you, feeling by itself is worthless—it is meant to lead to action, and if it fails to do this it is a danger rather than a blessing; for excited feeling that stops short of deeds is the precursor of callousness and hardness of heart. Your sensibility is well—but what has it *done?*

We feel the orphan's claims, and now comes the question, how shall we do them good?

Let us observe that Moses was nursed by a Hebrew matron. She was one of his own grade. It would have been a capital error to have given him to an Egyptian nurse. Probably, the princess left to herself would have done so. But then he would have been weaned from his own race. In heart, sympathies, feelings, he would have been an Egyptian. Nay, he would have been more exclusive; for the hardest are almost always those who have been raised above their former position. The slave's hardest taskmaster is a negro. The one who is most exclusive in his sympathies is usually the raised merchant, or the one recently ennobled.

This great thing is to emancipate the degraded through their own class. Only through their own class can they be effectually delivered; the mere patronage of the great and rich injures character.

So it was with Judaism; so it was with Christianity. The Redeemer was made of a woman—"born under the law to redeem them that were under the law." He who came to preach the Gospel to the poor, was born of a poor woman.

But it was not only a Hebrew nurse to whom Moses was given, it was a mother—his own mother—who nursed him; and from her he heard the story of his people's history. From her he learned to feel his country's wrongs to be his own. In the splendor of Pharaoh's court he never could forget that his mother was a slave, and that his father was working in brick and mortar, under cruel taskmasters.

From the princess he gained the wisdom of Egypt—he was taught legislative science. From hardship he learned endurance and patience. Instruction ends in the school-room, but education ends only with life. A child is given to the universe to educate.

Now let us see the results of this training on his intellectual and moral nature.

1. Intellectually. We will only notice the spirit of inquiry and habit of observation. To ask "Why?" is the best Christian lesson for a child. Not the "*why*" which is the language of disobedience, but that "*why*" which demands for all phenomena a cause. It was this which led Moses on Mount Horeb to say, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." So it was that Moses found out God.

2. In the moral part of his character we note his hatred of injustice and cruelty; ever was he found ranged against oppression in whatever form it might appear. He stood ever on the side of right against might, whether it was to avenge the wrong done by the Egyptian to one of his Hebrew brethren, or to rescue the daughter of the priest of Midian from the oppressing shepherds. He became, too, a peacemaker. Thus we get a glimpse of the moral and intellectual nature of the man who afterwards led Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and who, but for the education he had received, might have become as degraded as any of the nation he freed from slavery.

At the present day, that child who might have become so degraded, stands second but to One in dignity and influence in the annals of the human race. Take, for one example, the Jewish sabbath. Thousands upon thousands of that nation, fond of gain and mammon as they proverbially are said to be, yet gave up their gains yesterday, and voluntarily surrendered that one day in addition to this day which, by the law of the land, they are obliged to keep holy. And all this in obedience to the enactments of that orphan child, who three thousand years ago commanded the sabbath-day to be kept holy. In those days the Pharaohs of Egypt raised their memorials in the enduring stone of the pyramids, which still remain almost untouched by time. A princess of Egypt raised her memorial in a human spirit, and just so far as spirit is more enduring than stone, just so far is the work of that princess more enduring than the work of the Pharaohs; for when the day comes when those pyramids shall have crumbled into nothingness and ruin, then shall the spirit of the laws of Moses still remain interwoven with the most hallowed of human institutions. So long as the spirit of Moses influences this world, so long shall her work endure, the work of that royal-hearted lady who adopted this Hebrew orphan child.

It now only remains for me to say a word on the claims of that institution for which I am to plead to-day—the Female Orphan Asylum in this town. It was established in 1823, and for years its funds flourished; lately they have fallen off considerably, and that not in consequence of fault in the institution itself, but simply for this cause, that of those who took it up warmly once, many have been removed by death, and many have altered their place of residence, and also because many fresh calls and institutions have come forward, and thus have excluded this one. The consequence has been a sad falling off of funds. Last year the expenditure exceeded the receipts by one hundred pounds.

Within the walls of that institution, now almost dilapidated and falling into decay, there are twenty-four female orphan children, received from the age of six to sixteen; not educated above their station, but educated simply to enable them "to do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them."

And now I earnestly desire to appeal to you for this object by the thoughts that have to-day been brought before you. Because they are children, I make an appeal to every mother's and woman's heart; because they are females, young and unprotected, I make an appeal to the heart of every man who knows and feels the evils of society; because they belong to the lowest class, I make an appeal to all who have ever felt the infinite preciousness of the fact that the Saviour of this world was born a poor man's child.

My beloved Christian brethren, let us not be content with feeling; give, I pray you, as God has prospered you.

XXIV.

CHRISTIANITY AND HINDOOISM.

A FRAGMENT OF AN ADVENT LECTURE.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."—Deut. vi. 4, 5.

It is my intention, in giving the present course of lectures, to consider the advent of our Lord in connection with the cause of missionary labors. This connection is clear. His advent is the reign of God in the hearts of men; and it is the aim of the missionary to set up that kingdom in men's hearts. There is also a more indirect connection between the two, because at this time the Church Missionary Society is celebrating its jubilee. It is now fifty years since the first mission was established at Sierra Leone, where, although they who composed that little band were swept off one after another by jungle fever—their groans unheard, themselves unwept, and almost unhonored—yet there rose up other laborers after them; and a firm footing was at length gained in that dark heathen land.

On the Epiphany of next year we are to celebrate this jubilee in Brighton; and it has seemed to me a good preparation, that we should occupy, in thought, some field of missionary exertion, and look at the difficulties which those have had to contend against, who have gone out in that work. There can be no doubt as to which shall be first chosen for our contemplation. India, with its vast territories and millions of people, comes first, both as being one of our own possessions, and by the heavy responsibilities attaching to us on account of it.

We propose, therefore, to give some account of Hindoo superstition; and here I would remark, there are three ways of looking at idolatry.

I. There is the way of the mere *scholar*—that of men who read about it as the school-boy does, as a thing past—a curious but worn-out system. This scholastic spirit is the worst; for it treats the question of religious worship as a piece of antiquarianism, of no vital consequence, but just curious and amusing.

II. There is the view taken by the religious *partisan.* There are some men who, thinking their religion right, determine therefore that every one who differs from them is wrong. They look with scorn and contempt on the religion of the Hindoo, and only think how they may force theirs upon him. In this spirit, the world can never be evangelized. A man may say to another, "I can not understand your believing such folly," but he will not convince him so of his error. It is only by entering into the mind and difficulties of the heathen that we can learn how to meet them and treat them effectually.

III. There is the way of enlightened Christianity. In this spirit stood St. Paul on the hill at Athens. The beauty of Greek worship was nothing to him. To him it was still idolatry, though it was enlightened; but he was not hard enough not to be able to feel for them. He did not denounce it to them as damnable; he showed them that they were feeling after God, but blindly, ignorantly, wrongly. "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

The religion on which we are going to dwell to-day is one of the most subtle the world has ever received. It has stood the test of long ages and of great changes. The land has in turn submitted to the Macedonian, the Saracen, the Mohammedan conqueror; yet its civilization, and its ways of thinking, have remained always the same—in stagnation. We marvel how it has happened that their religion has remained sufficient for them. Let us look at it.

I. We take, as the first branch of our subject, the Hindoo conception of Divinity. We start with the assertion, that the god whom a man worships is but the reflection of himself. Tell us what a man's mind is, and we will tell you what his god is. Thus, amongst the Africans, the lowest and most degraded of mankind, forms of horror are reverenced. The frightful, black, shapeless god, who can be frightened by the noise of a drum, is their object of worship.

Our Scandinavian forefathers, whose delight was in the battle and the sea-fight, worshipped warlike gods, whose names still descend to us in the names given to the days of the week; they expected after death the conqueror's feast in Walhalla, the flowing cup, and the victor's wreath.

Look at Christianity itself. We profess to worship the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not all worship the same God. The God of the child is not the God of the man. He is a beneficent being—an enlarged representation (to him) of his own father. The man whose mind is cast in a stern mould worships a God who sits above to administer justice and punishment. The man who shrinks from the idea of suffering worships a placable God, who combines the greatest possible amount of happiness for the race with the least possible amount of pain.

[Now, consider the man who worships God as He appears in Jesus Christ.]

There are two things distinctly marked in the Hindoo religion: The love of physical repose; and mental activity, restlessness, and subtlety. Theirs are ideas passing through trains of thought which leave our European minds marvelling in astonishment.

Their first principle is that of God's unity. We are told by some that they have many gods, but all those who have deeply studied the subject agree in this—that they really have but *one*. This Hindoo deity is capable of two states—1. Inaction; 2. Action. The first state is that of a dreamless sleep, unconscious of its own existence; all attributes have passed away—it is infinite nothing. We remark in men generally a desire for *rest;* in the Hindoo it is a desire merely for indolence. Far deeper lodged in the human breast than the desire of honor or riches is seated the desire for rest: there are, doubtless, eager, earnest spirits, who may scorn pleasure, but, nevertheless, they long for rest. Well and rightly has the Hindoo thrown this idea on God; but he has erred in the character of that repose.

There are two kinds of rest: 1st. There is the rest desired by the world. 2d. There is the rest we find in Christ. The active mind, if out of its proper sphere, corrodes itself, and frets itself with plans and projects, finding no rest. The rest of Christ is not that of torpor, but harmony; it is not refusing the struggle, but conquering *in it;* not resting *from* duty, but finding rest *in* duty.

The sabbaths of eternity have kept the Supreme Mind in infinite blessedness: on our restless, unquiet, throbbing hearts, God has been looking down, serene and calm. When chaos took lovely form and shape, then that rest began—not in the torpor of inaction, but in harmonious work. "My Father worketh hitherto." God works in all the smallest objects of creation, as well as in the largest. Even in midnight stillness harmonious action is the law; when every thing seems to slumber, all is really at work, for the spirit of life and the spirit of death are weaving and unweaving forever.

We remark that to this god of Hindostan there rises no temple throughout the length and breadth of the land. If you ask in astonishment, why is this? the Hindoo replies, "Pure, unmixed Deity is *mind*, and can not be confined to place;" and well does he here teach us that God is a Spirit: but in his idea there is an exhibition of a god without qualities—a deity whom man may meditate on, and be absorbed in, but not one to be loved or adored.

Here is his first error; here we can teach him something—that God is a personal Being.

Personality is made up of three attributes—consciousness, character, will. Without the union of these three, the idea is imperfect. Personality the Hindoo Deity has none; therefore he can not be loved.

Now when we look at God as revealed in Jesus Christ, He appears to us as having a mind like ours; the ideas of number, of right and wrong, of sanctity, are to God precisely what they are to man. Conceive a mind without these, and it may be a high and lofty one, but there can be no communion with it. But when Christ speaks of love, of purity, of holiness, we feel that it is no abstraction we worship.

II. We shall consider as the second branch of our subject the Hindoo theory of creation.

We have spoken of the Hindoo Deity as capable of two states—that of perfection, or rest; that of imperfection, or unrest. The Hindoo thinks that a time arrives when rest becomes action, and slumber becomes life; and when, not willing to be alone, feeling solitary in his awaking, God wishes to impart life; therefore He creates.

Here again, we recognize a partial truth. In the Scriptures we never read of a time when God was alone. What is love but this, to find ourselves again in another? The "Word," we read, "was with God" before the world began. What the word is to the thought, that is Christ to God. Creation was one expression of this—of His inmost feelings of beauty and loveliness; whether it be the doleful sighings of the night-wind, or the flower that nestles in the grass, they tell alike of love. So has He also shown that love on earth, in the outward manifestation of the life of Christ—not only in the translated Word which we have—beautiful as it is, but in the living Word. Read without *this*, history is a dark, tangled web, philosophy a disappointing thing. Without *this* light society is imperfect, and the greatest men small and insignificant. From all these we turn to Christ; *here* is that perfect Word to which our hearts echo, where no one syllable is wrong.

There are two Hindoo theories of creation: the gross view held by the many; the refined one held by the philosopher and the Brahmin. Yet these two so mix and intermingle that it is difficult to give to European minds a clear notion of either of them separately. We will leave the popular view for another time, and we will try to deal now with the metaphysical and transcendental one. It is this—creation is illusion—the Deity awaking from sleep. The universe is God: God is the universe; therefore He can not create. The Hindoo says, You, and I, and all men, are but gods—ourselves in a wretched state of dream and illusion. We must try to explain this in part by our own records of times which we can all remember, when we have lain in a state between dreaming and waking—a phantasmagoric state, changing, combining, altering, like the kaleidoscope, so that we hardly knew realities from unrealities. "Such," says the Hindoo, "is your life—a delusion." I merely tell of this because it colors all Hindoo existence; the practical results we shall consider another time. For this the visionary contemplator of Brahm, and the Fakeer, sit beneath the tree, scarcely eating, speaking, or thinking; hoping at length to become absorbed into that calm, dreamless, passive state which to them represents perfection.

One truth we find acknowledged in this theory is the unreality of this world. Nobly has the Hindoo set forth the truth that the world is less real than the spirit. "What is your life? it is even a vapor." Ask you what we are to live for? The child, on whose young face the mother now gazes so tenderly, changes with years into the man with furrowed brow and silvered hair; constitutions are formed and broken, friendships pass, love decays, who can say he possesses the same now that blessed him in his early life? All passes whilst we look upon it. A most unreal, imaginative life. The spirit of life ever weaving—the spirit of death ever unweaving; all things putting on change.

In conclusion, we observe here a great truth—the evil of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is all evil. He who can dwell on this and that symptom of his moral nature is already diseased. We are too much haunted by ourselves; we project the spectral shadow of ourselves on every thing around us. And then comes in the Gospel to rescue us from this selfishness. Redemption is this—to forget self in God. Does not the mother forget herself for a time in the child; the loyal man in his strong feelings of devotion for his sovereign? So does the Christian forget himself in the feeling that he has to live here for the performance of the will of God.

[And now contrast the Hindoo religion with the Christian.]

The Hindoo tells us the remedy for this unreality is to be found in the long unbroken sleep. The Christian tells us the remedy is this, that this broken dream of life shall end in a higher life. Life is but a sleep, a dream, and death is the real awaking.

XXV.

REST.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."—Matt. xi. 28, 29.

No one, perhaps, ever read these words of Christ without being struck with their singular adaptation to the necessities of our nature. We have read them again and again, and we have found them ever fresh, beautiful, and new. No man could ever read them without being conscious that they realized the very deepest and inmost want of his being. We feel it is a convincing proof of His divine mission that He has thus struck the key-note of our nature, in offering us rest.

Ancient systems were busy in the pursuit after happiness. Our modern systems of philosophy, science, ay, even of theology, occupy themselves with the same thought; telling us alike that "happiness is our being's end and aim." But it is not so that the Redeemer teaches. His doctrine is in words such as these: "In the world ye shall have"—not happiness, but—"tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" "In Me ye shall have peace." Not happiness—the outward well-being so called in the world—but the inward rest which cometh from above. And He alone who made this promise had a right to say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He had that rest in Himself, and therefore could impart it; but it is often offered by men who have it not themselves. There are some, high professors of religion too, who have never known this real rest, and who at fifty, sixty, seventy years of age, are as much slaves of the world as when they began, desiring still the honors, the riches, or the pleasures it has to give, and utterly neglecting the life which is to come.

When we turn to the history of Christ we find this repose characterizing His whole existence. For example, first, in the marriage-feast at Cana, in Galilee. He looked not upon that festivity with cynical asperity; He frowned not upon the innocent joys of life: He made the wine to give enjoyment, and yet singularly contrasted was His human and His Divine joy. His mother came to Him full of consternation and said, "They have no wine:" and the Redeemer, with calm self-possession, replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." He felt not the deficiency which He supplied.

We pass from the marriage-feast to the scene of grief at Bethany, and still there we find that singular repose. Those words which we have seen to possess an almost magical charm in soothing the grief of mourners congregated round the coffin of the dead—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die"—speak they not of repose? But in the requirements of these great matters many men are not found wanting; it is when we come to the domesticities of their existence that we see fretting anxiety comes upon their soul. Therefore it is that we gladly turn to that home at Bethany where He had gone for quiet rest. Let us hear his words on the subject of everyday cares: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful."

We pass on from that to the state in which a man is tried the most: and if ever we can pardon words of restlessness and petulance, it is when friends are unfaithful. Yet even here there is perfect calmness. Looking steadfastly into the future, He says, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

Once more, we turn to the Redeemer's prayers. They are characterized by a calmness singularly contrasted with the vehemence which we sometimes see endeavoring to lash itself into a greater fervor of devotion. The model prayer has no eloquence in it; it is calm, simple, full of repose.

We find this again in the 17th chapter of St. John. If a man feels himself artificial and worldly, if a man feels restless, we would recommend him to take up that chapter as his best cure. For at least one moment, as he read it, he would feel in his soul calmness and repose; it would seem almost as if he were listening to the grave and solemn words of a divine soliloquy. This was the mind of Him who gave this gracious promise, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We repeat these words as a matter of course; but I ask, Has that repose been found?—has this peace come to us? for it is not by merely repeating them over and over again that we can enter into the deep rest of Christ.

Our subject this day will be to consider, in the first place, the false systems of rest which the world holds out, and to contrast them with the true rest of Christ. The first false system proposed is the expectation of repose in the grave. When the spirit has parted from the body after long-protracted sufferings, we often hear it said that the release was a happy one; that there is a repose in the grave; that there "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Nay, at times, perhaps, we find ourselves hazarding a wish that our own particular current of existence had come to that point, when it should mingle with the vast ocean of eternity.

There is in all this a kind of spurious Pantheism, a sort of feeling that God is alike in every heart, that every man is to be blessed at last, that death is but a mere transition to a blessed sleep, that in the grave there is nothing but quiet, and that there is no misery beyond it. And yet one of the deepest thinkers of our nation suggests that there *may be* dreams even in the sleep of death. There is an illusion often in the way in which we think of death. The countenance, after the spirit has departed, is so strangely calm and meek that it produces the feeling of repose within us, and we transfer our feelings to that of the departed spirit, and we fancy that body no longer convulsed with pain, those features so serene and full of peace, do but figure the rest which the spirit is enjoying; and yet, perhaps that soul, a few hours ago, was full of worldliness, full of pride, full of self-love. Think you that now that spirit is at rest—that it has entered into the rest of Christ? The repose that belongs to the grave is not even a rest of the atoms composing our material form.

There is another fallacious system of rest which would place it in the absence of outward trial. This is the world's peace. The world's peace ever consists in plans for the removal of outward trials. There lies at the bottom of all false systems of peace, the fallacy that if we can but produce a perfect set of circumstances, then we shall have the perfect man; if we remove temptation, we shall have a holy being: and so the world's rest comes to this—merely happiness and outward enjoyment. Ay, my Christian brethren, we carry these anticipations beyond the grave, and we think the heaven of God is but like the Mohammedan paradise—a place in which the rain shall beat on us no longer, and the sun pour his burning rays upon us no more. Very often it is only a little less sensual, but quite as ignoble as that fabled by Mohammed.

The Redeemer throws all this aside at once as mere illusion. He teaches just the contrary. He says, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world proposes a rest by the removal of a burden. The Redeemer gives rest by giving us the spirit and power to bear the burden. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Christ does not promise a rest of inaction, neither that the thorns shall be converted into roses, nor that the trials of life shall be removed.

To the man who takes this yoke up in Christ's spirit, labor becomes blessedness—rest of soul and rest of body.

It matters not in what circumstances men are, whether high or low, never shall the rest of Christ be found in ease and self-gratification; never, throughout eternity, will there be rest found in a life of freedom from duty: the paradise of the sluggard, where there is no exertion; the heaven of the coward, where there is no difficulty to be opposed, is not the rest of Christ. "Take my yoke upon you." Nay, more —if God could give us a heaven like that, it would be but misery; there can be no joy in indolent inaction. The curse on this world is labor; but to him who labors earnestly and truly it turns to blessedness. It is a curse only to him who tries to escape from the work allotted to him, who endeavors to make a compromise with duty. To him who takes Christ's yoke, not in a spirit of selfish ease and acquiescence in evil, but in strife and stern battle with it the rest of Christ streams in upon his soul.

Many of us are drifting away from our moorings; we are quitting the old forms of thought, and faith, and life, and are seeking for something other than what satisfied the last generation: and this in a vain search for rest.

Many are the different systems of repose offered to us, and foremost is that proposed by the Church of Rome. Let us do her the justice, at all events, to allow that she follows the Redeemer in this—it is not happiness she promises, she promises rest. The great strength of Romanism lies in this, that she professes to answer and satisfy the deep want of human nature for rest. She speaks of an infallibility on which she would persuade men, weary of the strain of doubt, to rest. It is not to the tales of miracles, and of the personal interference of God Himself; but to the promise of an impossibility of error to those within her pale, that she owes her influence. And we say, better far to face doubt and perplexity manfully; to bear any yoke of Christ's than be content with the rest of a Church's infallibility.

There is another error among many Dissenters; in a different form we find the same promise held out. One says, that if we will but rely on God's promise of election our soul must find repose. Another system tells us that the penalty has fallen upon Christ, and that if we believe we shall no longer suffer. Narrowing their doctrines into one, as if all the want of the soul was to escape from punishment, they place before us this doctrine, and say, believe that, and your soul shall find repose.

We have seen earnest men anxiously turning from view to view, and yet finding their souls as far from rest as ever. They remind us of the struggles of a man in fever, finding no rest, tossing from side to side, in vain seeking a cool spot on his pillow, and forgetting that the fever is within himself. And so it is with us; the unrest is within us: we foolishly expect to find that tranquillity in outward doctrine which alone can come from the calmness of the soul.

We will not deny that there is a *kind* of rest to be found in doctrine for a time: for instance, when a man, whose only idea of evil is its penalty, has received the consoling doctrine that there is no suffering for him to bear: but the unrest comes again. Doubtless, the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they went to the baptism of John, found something of repose there; but think you that they went back to their daily life with the rest of Christ? We expect some outward change will do that which nothing but the inward life can do—it is the life of Christ within the soul which alone can give repose. There have been men in the Church of Rome and in the ranks of dissent who have indeed erred grievously, but yet have lived a life of godliness. There have been men in the true Church—as Judas, who was a member of the true Church—who yet, step by step, have formed in themselves the devil's nature: the rest of Christ pertains not to any one outward communion.

Before we go farther, let us understand what is meant by this rest; let us look to those symbols about us in the world of nature by which it is suggested. It is not the lake locked in ice that suggests repose, but the river moving on calmly and rapidly in silent majesty and strength. It is not the cattle lying in the sun, but the eagle cleaving the air with fixed pinions, that gives you the idea of repose combined with strength and motion. In creation, the rest of God is exhibited as a sense of power which nothing wearies. When chaos burst into harmony, so to speak, God had rest.

There are two deep principles in nature in apparent contradiction—one, the aspiration after perfection; the other, the longing after repose. In the harmony of these lies the rest of the soul of man. There have been times when we have experienced this. Then the winds have been hushed, and the throb and the tumult of the passions have been blotted out of our bosoms. That was a moment when we were in harmony with all around, reconciled to ourselves and to our God; when we sympathized with all that was pure, all that was beautiful, all that was lovely.

This was not stagnation, it was fullness of life—life in its most expanded form, such as nature witnessed in her first hour. This is life in that form of benevolence which expands into the mind of Christ. And when this is working in the soul, it is marvellous how it distills into a man's words and countenance. Strange and magical is the power of that collect wherein we pray to God, "Who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, to grant unto His people that they may love the thing which He commands, and desire that which He promises; that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found." There is a wondrous melody in that rhythm; the words are the echoes of the thought. The mind of the man who wrote them was in repose—all is ringing of rest. We do not wonder when Moses came down from the mount on which he had been bowing in adoration before the harmony of God, that his face was shining with a brightness too dazzling to look upon.

Our blessed Redeemer refers this rest to meekness and lowliness. There are three causes in men producing unrest: 1. Suspicion of God. 2. Inward discord. 3. Dissatisfaction with outward circumstances. For all these meekness is the cure. For the difficulty of understanding this world, the secret is in meekness. There is no mystery in God's dealings to the meek man, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant;" there is no dread of God's judgments when our souls are meek.

The second cause of unrest is inward discord. We are going on in our selfishness. We stand, as Balaam stood, against the angel of the Lord, pressing on whilst the angel of love stands against us. Just as the dove struggling against the storm, feeble and tired, is almost spent, until gradually, as if by inspiration, it has descended to the lower atmosphere, and so avoided the buffeting of the tempests above, and is then borne on by the wind of heaven in entire repose: like that is the rest of the soul. While we are unreconciled, the love of God stands against us, and, by His will, as long as man refuses to take up that yoke of His, he is full of discord; he is like the dove struggling with the elements aloft, as yet unconscious of the calm there is below. And you must make no compromise in taking up the burden of the Lord.

Lastly, unrest comes from dissatisfaction with outward circumstances. Part, perhaps the greater part, of our misery here comes from over-estimation of ourselves. We are slaves to vanity and pride. We think we are not in the right station; our genius has been misunderstood; we have been slighted, we have been passed by, we have not been rewarded as we ought to have been. So long as we have this false opinion of ourselves, it is impossible for us to realize true rest.

Sinners, in a world of love, encircling you round on every side, with blessings infinite upon infinite, and that again multiplied by infinity: God loves you: God fills you with enjoyment! Unjustly, unfairly treated in this world of love! Once let a man know for himself what God is, and then in that he will find peace. It will be the dawn of an everlasting day of calmness and serenity. I speak to some who have felt the darkness, the clouds, and the dreariness of life, whose affections have been blighted, who feel a discord and confusion in their being. To some to whom the world, lovely though it be, is such that they are obliged to say, "I see, I do not feel, how beautiful it is."

Brother men, there is rest in Christ, because He is love; because His are the everlasting verities of humanity. God does not cease to be the God of love because men are low, sad, and desponding. In the performance of duty, in meekness, in trust in God, is our rest—our only rest. It is not in understanding a set of doctrines; not in an outward comprehension of the "scheme of salvation," that rest and peace are to be found, but in taking up, in all lowliness and meekness, the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

XXVI.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

A SERMON PREACHED ON ITS BEHALF.

"While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."—Mark v. 35–43.

I PLEAD to-day for a society whose cause has not been advocated in this chapel for many years. It is now exactly ten years since a collection was made in Trinity Chapel for the Humane Society.

Its general objects, as every body knows, are the preservation of the life of drowning persons, by precautions previously taken, and by subsequent remedies. But this vague statement being insufficient to awaken the interest which the society deserves, I propose to consider it in its details, and to view these—as in the pulpit we are bound to do—from the peculiar Christian point of view.

It is remarkable that there is a Scripture passage which, point by point, offers a parallel to the work of this Society, and a special sanction and a precedent, both for its peculiar work and the spirit in which it is to be done. I shall consider—

I. This particular form of the Redeemer's work.
II. The spirit of the Redeemer's work.

I. We find among the many forms of His work—

1. Restoration from a special form of death. I can not class this case with that of Lazarus.

The narrative seems to distinguish this from the other miracle. Christ says, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." Hence this particular case was one of restoration from apparent death. The other case was that of restoration from real death.

Here, then, is our first point of resemblance.

Before this society was formed, persons apparently suffocated were left to perish. Myriads, doubtless, have died who might have been saved. But the idea of restoration was as far from them as from the friends of Jairus. They would have laughed the proposer "to scorn." But, Christlike, this society came into the world with a strange message—revealed by science, but vitalized by love—a Christlike message: "Be not afraid: he is not dead, but sleepeth."

Now the sphere of the society's operations is thus defined: "To preserve from premature death persons apparently dead from either drowning, hanging, lightning, cold, heat, noxious vapors, apoplexy, or intoxication." They are, consequently, large, taking cognizance not merely of cases of drowning only, but all of the same generic character—suspended animation, apparent death, asphyxia.

[Causes—foul air, in drains and brewers' vats, accidental hanging, mines, cellars, wells.]

In England their causes are more peculiarly extensive, because of our sea-girt shores, and because of the variable climate, which to-day leaves the ice firm and to-morrow has made it rotten and unsafe.

2. Here was the recognition of the value of life. The force of the whole petition lay in one single consideration—"she shall live."

It has been often said that Christianity has enhanced the value of life, and our charitable societies are alleged in evidence; our hospitals; the increased average of human life, which has been the result of sanitary regulations and improvements in medical treatment. But this statement needs some qualification.

The value attached to life by the ancient Egyptian was quite as great as that attributed to it by the modern Englishman. When Abraham went into Egypt he found a people whose feeling of the sacredness of life was so great that they saw God wherever life was; and venerated the bull, and the fish, and the crocodile. To slay one of them was like murder.

And again: it could not be said that we owe to Christianity the recognition of the honor due to one who saves life.

The most honorable of crowns was that presented to one who had saved the life of a Roman citizen.

Nay more: instead of peculiarly exalting the value of life, there is a sense in which Christianity depreciates it. "If a man hate not his own life he can not be my disciple." The Son of Man came to be a sacrifice: and it is the peculiar dignity of the Christian that he has a life to *give.*

Therefore we must distinguish.

It is not mere life on which Christianity has shed a richer value. It is by ennobling the purpose to which life is to be dedicated that it has made life more precious. A crowded metropolis, looked at merely as a mass of living beings, is no more dignified, and far more disgusting, than an ant-hill with its innumerable creeping lives. Looked on as a place in which each individual is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and every pang and joy of whom has in it something of infinitude, it becomes almost priceless in its value.

And again: Christianity differs from heathenism in this, that it has declared the dignity of the life of man—not merely that of certain classes. It has not "saved citizens," but saved *men.*

[Consider the worth of a single soul.]

Hence this is appropriately called the *Humane* Society, that word originally meaning human. It is no Brahminical association, abstaining from shedding animal blood and living on no animal food, but it recognizes the worth of a life in which God moves, and which Christ has redeemed.

It is human life, not animal, that it cares for. The life of man as man, not of some peculiar class of men.

3. We consider the Saviour's direction respecting the means of effecting complete recovery. He "commanded that something should be given her to eat."

Observe His reverential submission to the laws of nature. He did not suspend those laws. It did not seem to Him that where law was, God was not; or that the proof of God's agency was to be found only in the abrogation of law. He recognized the sanctity of those laws which make certain remedies and certain treatment indispensable to health.

[Sanitary regulations are as religious as a miracle.]

And in doing this He furnished a precedent singularly close for the operations of this society. It is one great part of the object of its existence to spread a knowledge of the right methods of treatment in case of suspended animation. It has compiled and published rules for the treatment of the drowned, the apparently suffocated, and those struck by sudden apoplexy.

And consider the indirect results of this, as well as the direct.

Such cases occur unexpectedly. No medical aid is near. Friends are alarmed. Presence of mind is lost. The vulgar means resorted to from superstition and ignorance are almost incredible. But gradually the knowledge is spread through the country of what to do in cases of emergency. Many here would be prepared to act if a need arose. I have been present at such a case, and have seen life saved by arresting the rough treatment of ignorance acting traditionally. But in that and most cases, the knowledge had been gained from the publications of this society.

An immense step is gained by the systematic direction of attention to these matters. Every one ought to know what to do on a sudden emergency, a case of strangulation, of suffocation, or of apoplexy; and yet, this forming no definite part of the general plan of education, there are comparatively few who have the least idea what should be done before medical aid can be obtained. Probably thousands would be helpless as a child, and human life would be sacrificed.

II. We consider the spirit of the Redeemer's work.

1. It was love.

It was not reward—not even the reward of applause—which was the spring of beneficence in the Son of Man. He desired that it should be unknown. He did good because it was good. He relieved because it was the expression of His own exuberant loving-kindness.

2. It was a spirit of retiring modesty.

He did not wish that it should be known. But his disciples have made it known to the world.

Now observe, first, the evidence here afforded of His real humanity. Why did Christ wish to conceal, and the apostles wish to publish abroad his miracles? Take the simple view, and all is plain. Christ, the *man*, with unaffected modesty, shrank from publicity and applause. The apostles, with genuine human admiration, record the deed. But seek for some deeper and more mysterious reason, and at once the whole becomes a pantomime, an unreal transaction acted on this world's stage for effect, as though we should say that He was wishing to have it known, but for certain reasons He made as if He wished it to be concealed. Here, as usual, the simple is the sublime and true.

Observe, however, secondly: That publication by the apostles sanctions and explains another part of this society's operations. Its office is to observe, to record, and to reward acts of self-devotion. Certain scales of reward are given to one who risks his life to save life, to the surgeon whose skill restores life, to the publican who opens his house to receive the apparently dead body. And every year lists of names are published of those who have been thus distinguished by their humanity. The eyes of the society are over all England, and no heroic act can pass unnoticed or unhonored by them.

Now distinctly understand on what principle this is done. It is an apostolic office. It is precisely the principle on which the apostles were appointed by God to record the acts and life of Christ. Was this for Christ's sake? Nay, it was for the world's good. That sacrifice of Christ recorded, pronounced Divine, has been the spring and life of innumerable sacrifices and unknown self-devotion.

And so the rewards given by this society are not given as recompense. Think you that a medal can pay self-devotion? or a few pounds liquidate the debt due to generosity? or even, that the thought of the reward would lead a man to plunge into the water to save life, who would not have plunged in without any hope of reward? No! But it is good for the world to hear of what is generous and good. It is good to appropriate rewards to such acts, in order to set the standard. It is right that, in a country where enormous subscriptions are collected, and monuments are erected to men who have made fortunes by speculation, there should be some visible, tangible recognition of the worth and value of more generous deeds.

The medal over the fire-place of the poor fisherman is to him a *title;* and, truer than most titles, it tells what has been *done.* It descends an heirloom to the family, saying to the children, Be brave, self-sacrificing, as your father was.

3. It was a spirit of perseverance.

They laughed Him to scorn, yet He persisted. Slow, calm perseverance amidst ridicule.

In the progress of this society we find, again, a parallel. When the idea of resuscitation was first promulgated, it was met with incredulity and ridicule. Even in 1773, when Dr. Hawes laid the first foundation of the Humane Society, it was with difficulty he could overcome the prejudice which existed against the idea, and he had to bear the whole cost of demonstrating the practicability of his theory. For one whole year he paid all the rewards and expenses himself, and then, attracted by the self-sacrificing ardor with which he had given himself up to the idea of rescuing human life, thirty-two gentlemen, his own and Dr. Cogan's friends, united together in furtherance of this benevolent design, and thus laid the foundation of the Humane Society.

Here note the attractive power of self-denying work; the Redeemer's life and death has been the living power of the world's work, of the world's life.

XXVII.

THREE TIMES IN A NATION'S HISTORY.

> "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."—Luke xix. 41–44.

The event of which we have just read took place in the last year of our Redeemer's life. For nearly four years He had been preaching the Gospel. His pilgrim life was drawing to a close; yet no one looking at the outward circumstances of that journey would have imagined that He was on His way to die. It was far more like a triumphal journey, for a rejoicing multitude heralded His way to Jerusalem with shouts—"Hosanna to the Son of David!" He trod, too, a road green with palm branches, and strewn with their garments; and yet in the midst of all this joy, as if rejoicing were not for Him, the Man of Sorrows paused to weep.

There is something significant and characteristic in that peculiar tone of melancholy which pervaded the Redeemer's intercourse with man. We read of but one occasion on which He rejoiced, and then only in spirit. He did not shrink from occasions of human joy, for He attended the marriage-feast; yet even there the solemn remark, apparently out of place, was heard—"Mine hour is not yet come." There was in Him that peculiarity which we find more or less in all the purest, most thoughtful minds—a shade of melancholy; much of sadness; though none of austerity. For, after all, when we come to look at this life of ours, whatever may be its outward appearance, in the depths of it there is great seriousness; the externalities of it may seem to be joy and brightness, but in the deep beneath there is a strange, stern aspect. It may be that the human race is on its way to good, but the victory hitherto gained is so small that we can scarcely rejoice over it. It may be that human nature is progressing, but that progress has been but slowly making, through years and centuries of blood. And therefore contemplating all this, and penetrating beyond the time of the present joy, the Redeemer wept, not for Himself, but for that devoted city.

He was then on the Mount of Olives; beneath Him there lay the metropolis of Judea, with the Temple in full sight; the towers and the walls of Jerusalem flashing back the brightness of an Oriental sky. The Redeemer knew that she was doomed, and therefore with tears He pronounced her coming fate: "The days shall come that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another." These words, which rang the funeral knell of Jerusalem, tell out in our ears this day a solemn lesson; they tell us that in the history of nations, and also, it may be, in the personal history of individuals, there are three times—a time of grace, a time of blindness, and a time of judgment.

This then, is our subject—the three times in a nation's history. When the Redeemer spake, it was for Jerusalem the time of blindness; the time of grace was past; that of judgment was to come.

We take these three in order: first, the time of grace. We find it expressed here in three different modes: first, "in this thy day;" then, "the things which belong to thy peace;" and thirdly, "the time of thy visitation." And from this we understand the meaning of a time of grace; it was Jerusalem's time of opportunity. The time in which the Redeemer appeared was that in which faith was almost worn out. He found men with their faces turned backward to the past, instead of forward to the future. They were as children clinging to the garments of a relation they have lost; life there was not, faith there was not—only the garments of a past belief. He found them groaning under the dominion of Rome; rising up against it, and thinking it their worst evil.

The coldest hour of all the night is that which immediately precedes the dawn, and in that darkest hour of Jerusalem's night her light beamed forth; her wisest and greatest came in the midst of her, almost unknown, born under the law, to emancipate those who were groaning under the law. His life, the day of His preaching, was Jerusalem's time of grace.

During that time the Redeemer spake the things which belonged to her peace: those things were few and simple. He found her people mourning under political degradation. He told them that political degradation does not degrade the man; the only thing that can degrade a man is slavery to sin. He told men who were looking merely to the past, no longer to look thither and say that Abraham was their father, for that God could raise up out of those stones children to Abraham, and a greater than Abraham was there. He told them also not to look for some future deliverer, for deliverance was already come. They asked Him when the kingdom of God should come; He told them they were not to cry, Lo here! or, lo there! for the kingdom of God was within; that they were to begin the kingdom of God now, by each man becoming individually more holy, that if each man so reformed his own soul, the reformation of the kingdom would soon spread around them. They came to Him complaining of the Roman tribute; He asked for a piece of money, and said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and to God the things that be God's;"—plainly telling them that the bondage from which men were to be delivered was not an earthly, but a spiritual bondage. He drew the distinction sharply between happiness and blessedness—the two things are opposite, although not necessarily contrary. He told them, "Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the poor in spirit!" The mourning man, and the poor man, and the persecuted man—these were not happy, if happiness consists in the gratification of all our desires; but they were blessed beyond all earthly blessedness, for happiness is but the contentment of desire, while blessedness is the satisfaction of those aspirations which have God alone for their end and aim.

All these things were rejected by the nation. They were rejected first by the priests. They knew not that the mind of the age in which they lived was in advance of the traditional Judaism, and, therefore, they looked upon the Redeemer as an irreverent, ungodly man, a sabbath-breaker. He was rejected by the rulers, who did not understand that in righteousness alone are governments to subsist, and, therefore, when He demanded of them justice, mercy, truth, they looked upon Him as a revolutionizer. He was rejected likewise by the people—that people ever ready to listen to any demagogue promising them earthly grandeur. They who on this occasion called out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and were content to do so, so long as they believed He intended to lead them to personal comfort and enjoyment, afterwards cried out, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" "His blood be on us, and on our children;" so that His rejection was the act of the whole nation. Now, respecting this day of grace we have two remarks to make.

First: in this advent of the Redeemer there was nothing outwardly remarkable to the men of that day. It was almost nothing. Of all the historians of that period, few indeed are found to mention it. This is a thing which we at this day can scarcely understand; for to us the blessed advent of our Lord is the brightest page in the world's history: but to them it was far otherwise. Remember, for one moment, what the advent of our Lord was to all outward appearance. He seemed, let it be said reverently, to the rulers of those days, a fanatical freethinker. They heard of His miracles, but they appeared nothing remarkable to them; there was nothing there on which to fasten their attention. They heard that some of the populace had been led away, and now and then, it may be, some of His words reached their ears, but to them they were hard to be understood—full of mystery, or else they roused every evil passion in their hearts, so stern and uncompromising was the morality they taught. They put aside these words in that brief period, and the day of grace passed.

And just such as this is God's visitation to us. Generally, the day of God's visitation is not a day very remarkable outwardly. Bereavements, sorrows — no doubt, in these God speaks; but there are other occasions far more quiet and unobtrusive, but which are yet plainly days of grace. A scruple which others do not see, a doubt coming into the mind respecting some views held sacred by the popular creed, a sense of heart-loneliness and solitariness, a feeling of awful misgiving when the future lies open before us, the dread feeling of an eternal godlessness, for men who are living godless lives now—these silent moments unmarked, these are the moments in which the Eternal is speaking to our souls.

Once more: that day of Jerusalem's visitation—her day of grace—was short. It was narrowed up into the short space of three years and a half. After that, God still pleaded with individuals; but the national cause, as a cause, was gone. Jerusalem's doom was sealed when He pronounced those words. Again, there is a lesson, a principle for us: God's day of visitation is frequently short. A few actions often decide the destiny of individuals, because they give a destination and form to habits; they settle the tone and form of the mind from which there will be in this life no alteration. So it is in the earliest history of our species. In those mysterious chapters at the commencement of the book of Genesis, we are told that it was one act which sealed the destiny of Adam and of all the human race. What was it but a very few actions, done in a very short time, that settled the destiny of those nations through which the children of Israel passed on their way to Canaan? The question for them was simply, whether they would show Israel mercy or not; this was all.

Once more: we see it again in the case of Saul. One circumstance, at the most, two, marked out his destiny. Then came those solemn words, "The strength of Israel can not lie nor repent. The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day." From that hour his course was downward, his day of grace was past.

Brethren, the truth is plain. The day of visitation is awfully short. We say not that God *never* pleads a long time, but we say this, that sometimes God speaks to a nation or to a man but once. If not heard then, His voice is heard no more.

We pass on now to consider Israel's day of blindness. Judicial blindness is of a twofold character. It may be produced by removing the light, or by incapacitating the eye to receive that light. Sometimes men do not see because there is no light for them to see; and this was what was done to Israel—the Saviour was taken away from her. The voice of the apostles declared this truth: "It was necessary that the word should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

There is a way of blindness by hardening the heart. Let us not conceal this truth from ourselves. God blinds the eye, but it is in the appointed course of His providential dealings. If a man *will not* see, the law is he *shall* not see; if he will not *do* what is right when he knows the right, then right shall become to him wrong, and wrong shall seem to be right. We read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; that He blinded Israel. It is impossible to look at these cases of blindness without perceiving in them something of Divine action. Even at the moment when the Romans were at their gates, Jerusalem still dreamed of security; and when the battering-ram was at the tower of Antonia, the priests were celebrating, in fancied safety, their daily sacrifices. From the moment when our Master spake, there was deep stillness over her until her destruction; like the strange and unnatural stillness before the thunder-storm, when every breath seems hushed, and every leaf may be almost heard moving in the motionless air; and all this calm and stillness is but the prelude to the moment when the east and west are lighted up with the red flashes, and the whole creation seems to reel. Such was the blindness of that nation which would not know the day of her visitation.

We pass on now to consider, lastly, her day of judgment. Her beautiful morning was clouded, her sun had gone down in gloom, and she was left in darkness. The account of the siege is one of the darkest passages in Roman history. In the providence of God, the history of that belongs, not to a Christian, but to a Jew. We all know the account that he has given us of the eleven hundred thousand who perished in that siege, of the thousands crucified along the sea-shore. We have all heard of the two factions that divided the city, of the intense hatred that made the cruelty of Jew towards Jew more terrible than even the vengeance of the Romans. This was the destruction of Jerusalem—the day of her ruin.

And now, brethren, let us observe, this judgment came in the way of natural consequences. We make a great mistake respecting judgments. God's judgments are not arbitrary, but the results of natural laws. The historians tell us that Jerusalem owed her ruin to the fanaticism and obstinate blindness of her citizens; from all of which her Redeemer came to emancipate her. Had they understood, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are the peacemakers;" had they understood that, Jerusalem's day of ruin might never have come.

Now let us apply this to the day we are at present celebrating. We all know that this destruction of Jerusalem is connected with the second coming of Christ. In St. Matthew the two advents are so blended together that it is hard to separate one from the other; nay, rather, it is impossible, because we have our Master's words, "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled." Therefore this prophecy, in all its fullness, came to pass in the destruction of Jerusalem. But it is impossible to look at it without perceiving there is also something farther included; we shall understand it by turning to the elucidation given by our Lord Himself. When the apostles asked, Where shall all these things be? His reply was, in effect, this: Ask you where? I tell you, nowhere in particular, or rather, everywhere; for wheresoever there is corruption, there will be destruction—"where the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." So that this first coming of the Son of Man to judgment was the type, the specimen of what shall be hereafter.

And now, brethren, let us apply this subject still more home. Is there no such thing as blindness among ourselves? May not this be *our* day of visitation? First, there is among us priestly blindness; the blindness of men who know not that the demands of this age are in advance of those that have gone before. There is no blindness greater than that of those who think that the panacea for the evils of a country is to be found in ecclesiastical union. But let us not be mistaken: it is not here, we think, that the great danger lies. We dread not Rome. No man can understand the signs of the times, who does not feel that the day of Rome is passing away, as that of Jerusalem once did. But the danger lies in this consideration—we find that where the doctrines of Rome have been at all successful, it has been among the clergy and upper classes; while, when presented to the middle and lower classes, they have been at once rejected. There is, then, apparently, a gulf between the two. If there be added to the difference of position a still further and deeper difference of religion, then who shall dare to say what the end shall be?

Once more: we look at the blindness of men talking of intellectual enlightenment. It is true that we have more enlightened civilization and comfort. What then? will that retard our day of judgment? Jerusalem was becoming more enlightened, and Rome was at its most civilized point, when the destroyer was at their gates.

Therefore, let us know the day of our visitation. It is not the day of refinement, nor of political liberty, nor of advancing intellect. We must go again in the old, old way; we must return to simpler manners and to a purer life. We want more faith, more love. The life of Christ and the death of Christ must be made the law of our life. Reject that, and we reject our own salvation; and, in rejecting that, we bring on in rapid steps, for the nation and for ourselves, the day of judgment and of ruin.

XXVIII.

INSPIRATION.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Rom. xv. 1–4.

We will endeavor, brethren, to search the connection between the different parts of these verses.

First, the apostle lays down a Christian's duty—"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." After that he brings forward as the sanction of that duty, the spirit of the life of Christ — "For even Christ pleased not Himself." Next, he adds an illustration of that principle by a quotation from Psalm lxix: "It is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Lastly, he explains and defends that application of the psalm, as if he had said, "I am perfectly justified in applying that passage to Christ, for 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.'"

So that in this quotation, and the defense of it as contained in these verses, we have the principle of apostolical interpretation; we have the principle upon which the apostles used the Old Testament Scriptures, and we are enabled to understand their view of inspiration. This is one of the most important considerations upon which we can be at this moment engaged. It is the deepest question of our day: the one which lies beneath all others, and in comparison of which the questions just now agitating the popular mind—whether of Papal jurisdiction or varieties of Church doctrine in our own communion—are but superficial: it is this grand question of inspiration which is given to this age to solve.

Our subject will break itself up into questions such as these: What the Bible is, and what the Bible is not? What is meant by inspiration? Whether inspiration is the same thing as infallibility? When God inspired the minds, did He dictate the words? Does the inspiration of men mean the infallibility of their words? Is inspiration the same as dictation? Whether, granting that we have the

Word of God, we have also the words of God? Are the operations of the Holy Spirit, inspiring men, compatible with partial error, as His operations in sanctifying them are compatible with partial evil? How are we to interpret and apply the Scriptures? Is Scripture, as the Romanists say, so unintelligible and obscure that we can not understand it without having the guidance of an infallible Church? Or is it, as some fanciful Protestants will tell us, a book upon which all ingenuity may be used to find Christ in every sentence? Upon these things there are many views, some of them false, some superstitious; but it is not our business now to deal with these; our way is rather to teach positively than negatively: we will try to set up the truth, and error may fall before it.

The collect for this day leads us to the special consideration of Holy Scripture; We shall therefore take this for our subject, and endeavor to understand what was the apostolical principle of interpretation.

In the text we find two principles: first, that Scripture is of universal application;

And second, that all the lines of Scripture converge towards Jesus Christ.

First, then, there is here a universal application of Scripture. This passage quoted by the apostle is from the sixty-ninth Psalm. That was evidently spoken by David of himself. From first to last, no unprejudiced mind can detect a conception in the writer's mind of an application to Christ, or to any other person after him; the psalmist is there full of himself and his own sorrows. It is a natural and touching exposition of human grief and a good man's trust. Nevertheless, you will observe that St. Paul extends the use of these words, and applies them to Jesus Christ. Nay, more than that, he uses them as belonging to all Christians; for, he says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." Now this principle will be more evident if we state it in the words of Scripture, "Knowing that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation:" those holy men spake not their own limited individual feelings, but as feeling that they were inspired by the Spirit of God. Their words belonged to the whole of our common humanity. No prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. Bear in mind that the word prophecy does not mean what we now understand by it—merely prediction of future events—in the Scriptures it signifies inspired teaching. The teaching of the prophets was by no means always prediction. Bearing this in mind, let us remember that the apostle says it is of no private interpretation. Had the Psalm applied only to David, then it would have been of private interpretation—it would have been special, limited, particular; it would have belonged to an individual; instead of which, it belongs to humanity. Take again the subject of which we spoke last Sunday—the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Manifestly that was spoken originally at Jerusalem; in a manner it seemed limited to Jerusalem, for its very name was mentioned; and besides, as we read this morning, our Saviour says, "This generation shall not pass until all be fulfilled."

But had the prophecy ended there, then you would still have had prophecy, but it would have been of private—that is, peculiar, limited—interpretation; whereas our Redeemer's principle was this: that this doom pronounced on Jerusalem was universally applicable, that it was but a style and specimen of God's judgments. The judgment-coming of the Son of Man takes place wherever there is evil grown ripe, whenever corruption is complete. And the gathering of the Roman eagles is but a specimen of the way in which judgment at last overtakes every city, every country and every man in whom evil has reached the point where there is no possibility of cure.

So that the prophecy belongs to all ages, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world. The words of St. Matthew are universally applicable. For Scripture deals with principles; not with individuals, but rather with states of humanity. Promises and threatenings are made to individuals, because they are in a particular state of character; but they belong to all who are in that state, for "God is no respecter of persons."

First, we will take an instance of the state of blessing.

There was blessing pronounced to Abraham, in which it will be seen how large a grasp on humanity this view of Scripture gave to St. Paul. The whole argument in the Epistle to the Romans is, that the promises made to Abraham were not to his person, but to his faith; and thus the apostle says, "They who are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham."

We will now take the case of curse or threatening. Jonah, by Divine command, went through Nineveh, proclaiming its destruction; but that prophecy belonged to the state in which Nineveh was; it was true only while it remained in that state; and therefore, as they repented, and their state was thus changed, the prophecy was left unfulfilled. From this we perceive the largeness and grandeur of Scripture interpretation. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, we find the apostle telling of the state of the Jews in their passage towards the promised land, their state of idolatry and gluttony, and then he proceeds to pronounce the judgments that fell upon them, adding that he tells us this not merely as a matter of history, but rather as an illustration of a principle. They are specimens of eternal, unalterable law. So that whosoever shall be in the state of these Jews, whosoever shall imitate them, the same judgments must fall upon them, the same satiety and weariness, the same creeping of the inward serpent polluting all their feelings; and therefore he says, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples." Again, he uses the same principle, not as a private, but a general application; for he says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

We will take now another case, applied not to nations, but to individuals. In Hebrews xiii. we find these words from the Old Testament, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and there the apostle's inference is that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what men shall do unto me." Now, when we refer to Scripture, we shall find that this was a promise originally made to Jacob. The apostle does not hesitate to take that promise and appropriate it to all Christians; for it was made, not to Jacob as a person, but to the state in which Jacob was; it was made to all who, like Jacob, are wanderers and pilgrims in the world; it was made to all whom sin has rendered outcasts and who are longing to return. The promises made to the meek belong to meekness; the promises made to the humble belong to humility.

And this it is which makes this Bible, not only a blessed book, but *our* book. It is this universal applicability of Scripture which has made the influence of the Bible universal: this book has held spell-bound the hearts of nations, in a way in which no single book has ever held men before. Remember, too, in order to enhance the marvellousness of this, that the nation from which it emanated was a despised people. For the last eighteen hundred years the Jews have been proverbially a by-word and a reproach. But that contempt for Israel is nothing new to the world, for before even the Roman despised them, the Assyrian and Egyptian regarded them with scorn. Yet the words which came from Israel's prophets have been the life-blood of the world's devotions. And the teachers, the psalmists, the prophets, and the lawgivers of this despised nation spoke out truths that have struck the key-note of the heart of man; and this, not because they were of Jewish, but just because they were of universal application.

This collection of books has been to the world what no other book has ever been to a nation. States have been founded on its principles. Kings rule by a compact based on it. Men hold the Bible in their hands when they prepare to give solemn evidence affecting life, death, or property; the sick man is almost afraid to die unless the book be within reach of his hands; the battle-ship goes into action with one on board whose office is to expound it; its prayers, its psalms are the language which we use when we speak to God; eighteen centuries have found no holier, no diviner language. If ever there has been a prayer or a hymn enshrined in the heart of a nation, you are sure to find its basis in the Bible. There is no new religious idea given to the world, but it is merely the development of something given in the Bible. The very translation of it has fixed language and settled the idioms of speech. Germany and England speak as they speak because the Bible was translated. It has made the most illiterate peasant more familiar with the history, customs, and geography of ancient Palestine than with the localities of his own country. Men who know nothing of the Grampians, of Snowden, or of Skiddaw, are at home in Zion, the Lake of Gennesareth, or among the rills of Carmel. People who know little about London, know by heart the places in Jerusalem where those blessed feet trod which were nailed to the cross. Men who know nothing of the architecture of a Christian cathedral, can yet tell you all about the pattern of the holy temple. Even this shows us the influence of the Bible. The orator holds a thousand men for half an hour breathless—a thousand men as one, listening to his single word. But this Word of God has held a thousand nations for thrice a thousand years spellbound; held them by an abiding power, even the universality of its truth; and we feel it to be no more a collection of books, but *the* book.

We pass on now to consider the second principle contained in these words, which is, that all Scripture bears towards Jesus Christ. St. Paul quotes these Jewish words as fulfilled in Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the central point in which all the converging lines of Scripture meet. Again we state this principle in Scripture language: in the book of Revelation we find it written, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," that is, the sum and substance of prophecy, the very spirit of Scripture is to bear testimony to Jesus Christ. We must often have been surprised and perplexed at the way in which the apostles quote passages in reference to Christ which originally had no reference to Him. In our text, for instance, David speaks only of himself, and yet St. Paul refers it to Christ. Let us understand this. We have already said that Scripture deals not with individuals, but with states and principles. Promises belong to persons only so far as they are what they are taken to be; and consequently all unlimited promises made to individuals, so far as they are referred merely to those individuals, are necessarily exaggerated and hyperbolical. They can only be true of One in whom that is fulfilled which was unfulfilled in them.

We will take an instance. We are all familiar with the well-known prophecy of Balaam. We all remember the magnificent destinies he promised to the people whom he was called to curse. Those promises have never been fulfilled, neither from the whole appearance of things does it seem likely that they ever will be fulfilled in their literal sense. To whom, then, are they made? To Israel? Yes; so far as they developed God's own conception. Balaam says, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." Is this the character of Israel, an idolatrous and rebellious nation? Spoken of the literal Israel, this prophecy is false; but it was not false of that spotlessness and purity of which Israel was the temporal and imperfect type. If one can be found of whom that description is true, of whom we can say, the Lord hath not beheld iniquity in him, to him then that prophecy belongs.

Brethren, Jesus of Nazareth is that pure and spotless One. Christ is perfectly, all that every saint was partially. To Him belongs all: all that description of a perfect character, which would be exaggeration if spoken of others, and to this character the blessing belongs; hence it is that all the fragmentary representations of character collect and centre in Him alone. Therefore, the apostle says, "It was added until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Consequently St. Paul would not read the Psalm as spoken only of David. Were the lofty aspirations, the purity and humbleness expressed in the text, true of him, poor, sinful, erring David? These were the expressions of the Christ within his heart—the longing of the Spirit of God within Him; but they were no proper representation of the spirit of his life, for there is a marvellous difference between a man's ideal and his actual—between the man and the book he writes—a difference between the aspirations within the man and the character which is realized by his daily life. The promises are to the Christ within David; therefore they are applied to the Christ when He comes. Now, let us extract from that this application.

Brethren, Scripture is full of Christ. From Genesis to Revelation every thing breathes of Him, not every letter of every sentence, but the spirit of every chapter. It is full of Christ, but not in the way that some suppose; for there is nothing more miserable, as specimens of perverted ingenuity, than the attempts of certain commentators and preachers to find remote, and recondite, and intended allusions to Christ everywhere. For example, they chance to find in the construction of the temple the fusion of two metals, and this they conceive is meant to show the union of Divinity with Humanity in Christ. If they read of coverings to the tabernacle, they find implied the doctrine of imputed righteousness. If it chance that one of the curtains of the tabernacle be red, they see in that the prophecy of the blood of Christ. If they are told that the kingdom of heaven is a pearl of great price, they will see it in the allusion—that, as a pearl is the production of animal suffering, so the kingdom of heaven is produced by the sufferings of the Redeemer. I mention this perverted mode of comment, because it is not merely harmless, idle, and useless; it is positively dangerous. This is to make the Holy Spirit speak riddles and conundrums, and the interpretation of Scripture but clever riddle-guessing. Putting aside all this childishness, we say that the Bible is full of Christ. Every unfulfilled aspiration of humanity in the past; all partial representation of perfect character; all sacrifices, nay even those of idolatry, point to the fulfillment of what we want, the answer to every longing—the type of perfect humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Get the habit—a glorious one—of referring all to Christ. How did He feel?—think?—act? So then must I feel, and think, and act. Observe how Christ was a living reality in St. Paul's mind. "Should I please myself?" "For even Christ pleased not Himself;" "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

XXIX.

THE LAST UTTERANCES OF CHRIST.

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."—John xix. 30.

There are seven dying sentences of our Lord's recorded in the Gospels; one recorded conjointly by St. Matthew and St. Mark, three recorded by St. Luke, and three by St. John. That recorded by the first two evangelists is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Those preserved by St. Luke only are, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." The three recorded by St. John are these: "I thirst;" "Behold thy mother; behold thy son;" and lastly, "It is finished." And these seven group themselves into two divisions: we perceive that some of them are the utterances of personal feeling, and others are the utterances of sympathy for others.

These are, therefore, the two divisions of our subject to day—

I. The natural exclamations of the Man.
II. The utterances of the Saviour.

The first of those which we class under the exclamations of the Man, referring to His personal feelings, is, "I thirst;" in answer to which they gave Him vinegar to drink. Now upon first reading this, we are often tempted to suppose, from the unnatural character of the draught, that an insult was intended; and therefore we rank this among the taunts and fearful sufferings which He endured at His crucifixion. But as we become acquainted with Oriental history, we discover that this vinegar was the common drink of the Roman army, their wine, and therefore was the most likely to be at hand when in the company of soldiers, as He then was. Let it be borne in mind that a draught was twice offered to him: once it was accepted, once it was refused. That which was refused was the medicated potion—wine mingled with myrrh—the intention of which was to deaden pain, and therefore when it was presented to the Saviour it was rejected. And the reason commonly assigned for that seems to be the true one: the Son of Man would not meet death in a state of stupefaction, He chose to meet His God awake.

There are two modes in which pain may be struggled with —through the flesh, and through the spirit; the one is the office of the physician, the other that of the Christian. The physician's care is at once to deaden pain either by insensibility or specifics; the Christian's object is to deaden pain by patience. We dispute not the value of the physician's remedies, in their way they are permissible and valuable; but yet let it be observed that in these there is nothing moral; they may take away the venom of the serpent's sting, but they do not give the courage to plant the foot upon the serpent's head, and to bear the pain without flinching. Therefore the Redeemer refused, because it was not through the flesh, but through the Spirit, that He would conquer; to have accepted the anodyne would have been to escape from suffering, but not to conquer it. But the vinegar or sour wine was accepted as a refreshing draught, for it would seem that He did not look upon the value of the suffering as consisting in this, that He should make it as exquisite as possible, but rather that He should not suffer one drop of the cup of agony which His Father had put into His hand to trickle down the side untasted. Neither would He make to Himself one drop more of suffering than His Father had given.

There are books on the value of pain; they tell us that if of two kinds of food the one is pleasant and the other nauseous, we are to choose the nauseous one. Let a lesson on this subject be learnt from the Divine example of our Master.

To suffer pain for others without flinching, that is our Master's example; but pain for the mere sake of pain, that is not Christian; to accept poverty in order to do good for others, that is our Saviour's principle; but to become poor for the sake and the merit of being poor, is but selfishness after all. Our Lord refused the anodyne that would have made the cup untasted which His Father had put into His hand to drink, but He would not taste one drop more than His Father gave him. Yet He did not refuse the natural solace which His Father's hand had placed before Him.

There are some who urge most erroneously the doctrine of discipline and self-denial. If of two ways one is disagreeable, they will choose it, just because it is disagreeable; because food is pleasant and needful, they will fast. There is in this a great mistake. To deny self for the sake of duty is right—to sacrifice life and interests rather than principle is right; but self-denial for the mere sake of self-denial, torture for torture's sake, is neither good nor Christlike. Remember, He drank the cooling beverage in the very moment of the sacrifice; the value of which did not consist in its being made as intensely painful as possible, but in His not flinching from the pain, when love and duty said, Endure.

His second exclamation was, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" We will not dive into the deep mysteries of that expression—we will not pretend to be wiser than what is written, endeavoring to comprehend where the human is mingled with the Divine—we will take the matter simply as it stands. It is plain from this expression that the Son of God *felt* as if He had been deserted by His Father. We know that He was not deserted by Him, or else God had denied Himself, after saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And they who maintain that this was real desertion, attribute that to the Lord of Love which can alone belong to Judas—the desertion of innocence—therefore we conclude that it arose from the infirmities of our Master's innocent human nature. It was the darkening of His human soul, not the hiding of God's countenance. He was worn, faint, and exhausted; His body was hanging from four lacerated wounds; and more than that, there was much to perplex the Redeemer's human feelings, for He was suffering there, the innocent for the guilty. For once God's law seemed reversed; and then came the human cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

And now, brethren, observe in this, that it arose apparently from the connection of the Redeemer's death with sin. When the death-struggle of the flesh begins, and we first become aware of the frailty of our humanity, then the controversy of God with the soul is felt to be real by reason of our consciousness of sin; then is felt, as it were, the immense gulf that separates between the pure and the impure. In the case of the Son of Man this was, of course, impossible; consciousness of sin He had none, for He had no sin; but there was a connection, so to speak, between the death of Christ and sin, for the apostle says, "In that He died, He died unto sin once." "He died unto sin;" there was a connection between His death and sin, though it was not His own sin, but the sin of the whole world. In that moment of the apparent victory of evil, the Redeemer's spirit, as it would appear, felt a darkness similar to ours when sin has hidden our consciousness of God. When death is merely natural, we can feel that the hand of God is there; but when man interferes, and the hand of God is invisible, and that of man is alone seen, then all seems dark and uncertain. The despondency of the Redeemer was not supernatural, but most natural darkness. The words He used were not his own, but David's words; and this proclaims that suffering such as He was then bearing had been borne before Him—the difference was in degree, not in kind. The idea of piety struggling with, and victorious over evil, had been exhibited on earth before. The idea was imperfectly exhibited in the sufferings of Israel regarded as typical of Christ. In Christ alone is it perfectly presented. So also that wondrous chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, justly describing both, belongs in its entireness to Christ: He therefore adopted these words as His own.

The last personal ejaculation of our Redeemer was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." We take this in connection with the preceding; for if we do not, the two will be unintelligible, but taking them together, it becomes plain that the darkness of the Redeemer's mind was but momentary. For a moment the Redeemer felt alone and deserted, and then, in the midst of it, He cried out, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." In that moment He realized His inseparable union with the Father.

And now I would observe, if I may do it without being misunderstood, that the Redeemer speaks as if not knowing where He was going—"Into Thy hands," that is sufficient. It is as well to look at these things as simply as possible. Do not confuse the mind with attempting to draw the distinction between the human and the Divine. He speaks here as if His human soul, like ours, entered into the dark unknown, not seeing what was to be in the hereafter: and this is faith, or, if it were not so, there arises an idea from which we shrink, as if He were speaking words He did not feel. We know nothing of the world beyond, we are like children; even revelation has told us almost nothing concerning this, and an inspired apostle says, "We know not yet what we shall be." Then rises faith, and dares to say, "My Father, I know nothing, but, be where I may, still I am with Thee;" "Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." Therefore, and only therefore, do we dare to die.

We pass on, secondly, to the consideration of those utterances which our Master spake as the Saviour of the world. The first is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." From this expression we infer two things: first, that sin needs forgiveness; and, secondly, that forgiveness can be granted.

Sin needs forgiveness, or the Redeemer would not have so prayed. That it needs forgiveness we also prove, from the fact that it always connects itself with penalty. Years may separate the present from your past misconduct, but the re membrance of it remains; nay, more than that, even those errors which we did ignorantly carry with them their retribution; and from this we collect the fact that even errors, failures in judgment, need God's forgiveness. Another proof that sin needs pardon is from the testimony of conscience. In all men it speaks, in some in but a feeble whisper, in others with an irregular sound, now a lull, and then a storm of recollection; in others, conscience is as a low perpetual knell, ever sounding, telling of the death going on within, proclaiming that the past has been accursed, the present withered, and that the future is one vast terrible blank.

In these several forms, conscience tells us also that the sin has been committed against our Father. The permanence of all our acts, the eternal consequences of every small thing done by man, all point to God as the One against whom the sin is committed; and, therefore, that voice still speaks, though the thing we have done never can be undone. The other thing that we learn from that utterance of Christ is, that the pardon of sin is a thing possible, for the utterance of Christ was the expression of the voice of God—it was but another form of the Father saying, "I can and I will forgive."

Remark here a condition imposed by Christ on the Divine forgiveness when He taught His disciples to pray: "If ye forgive men from your hearts, your Father will forgive you; but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you." It is natural to forgive on a dying bed; yet that forgiveness is only making a merit of necessity, for we can revenge ourselves no more. There is abundance of good-natured charity abroad in the world; that charity which is indiscriminating. It may co-exist with the resentment of personal injury, but the spirit of forgiveness which we must have before we can be forgiven, can be ours only so far as our life is a representative of the life of Christ. Then it is possible for us to realize God's forgiveness.

The second utterance which our Lord spake for others rather than Himself was, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Now, what we have here to observe on is the law of personal influence; the dying hour of Christ had an influence over one thief—he became converted. The first thing we remark is, that indirect influence often succeeds where direct influence has failed. Thus, when the Redeemer selected His disciples, and endeavored to teach them His truth, that was direct influence; but when He prayed for them, and those disciples heard Him, and then came to Him with this petition, "Lord, teach us to pray," that was indirect influence; and so in this instance, while praying for Himself, He did influence the mind of the dying thief, though that influence was indirect. Indirect influence is often far more successful than that which is direct; and for this reason, the direct aims that we make to convert others may be contradicted by our lives, while the indirect influence is our very life. What we really are, somehow or other, will ooze out, in tone, in look, in act, and this tells upon those who come in daily contact with us. The law of personal influence is mysterious. The influence of the Son of God told on the one thief, not on the other; it softened and touched the hearts of two of His hearers, but it only hardened others. There is much to be learnt from this, for some are disposed to write bitter things against themselves because their influence on earth has failed. Let all such remember that some are too pure to act universally on others. If our influence has failed, the Redeemer's was not universal.

The third utterance of our Master on the cross, for others, not for himself, was, "Behold thy mother!" He who was dying on the cross, whose name was Love, was the great philanthropist, whose charity embraced the whole human race. His last dying act was an act of individual attachment—tenderness towards a mother, fidelity towards a friend. Now some well-meaning persons seem to think that the larger charities are incompatible with the indulgence of particular affections; and therefore, all that they do, and aim at, is on a large scale—they occupy themselves with the desire to emancipate the whole mass of mankind. But, brethren, it not unfrequently happens that those who act in this manner are but selfish after all, and are quite inattentive to all the fidelities of friendship and the amenities of social life. It was not so, if we may venture to say it, that the Spirit of the Redeemer grew, for as He progressed in wisdom and knowledge, He progressed also in love. First, we read of His tenderness and obedience to His parents, then the selection of twelve to be near Him from the rest of the disciples, and then the selection of one, more especially, as a friend. It was through this, that, apparently, His human soul grew in grace and in love. And if it were not so with Him, at all events it must be so with us. It is in vain for a man in his dying hour, who has loved no man individually, to attempt to love the human race; every thing here must be done by degrees. Love is a habit. God has given to us the love of relations and friends, the love of father and mother, brother, sister, friend, to prepare us gradually for the love of God; if there be one stone of the foundation not securely laid, the superstructure will be imperfect. The domestic affections are the alphabet of love.

Lastly, our Master said, "It is finished," partly for others, partly for Himself. In the earliest part of His life, we read that He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with;" to Him, as to every human soul, this life had its side of darkness and gloom, but all that was now accomplished: He has drunk His last earthly drop of anguish, He has to drink the wine no more till he drink it new in his Father's kingdom. It was finished; all was over; and with, as it were, a burst of subdued joy, He says, "It is finished."

There is another aspect in which we may regard these words as spoken also for others. The way in which our Redeemer contemplated this life was altogether a peculiar one. He looked upon it, not as a place of rest or pleasure, but simply, solely, as a place of duty. He was here to do his Father's will, not his own; and therefore, now that life was closed, he looked upon it chiefly as a duty that was fulfilled. We have the meaning of this in the seventeenth chapter of this Gospel: "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." The duty is done, the work is finished. Let us each apply this to ourselves. That hour is coming to us all; indeed it is, perhaps, *now* come. The dark night settles down on each day.

"It is finished." We are *ever* taking leave of something that will not come back again. We let go, with a pang, portion after portion of our existence. However dreary we may have felt life to be here, yet when that hour comes—the winding up of all things, the last grand rush of darkness on our spirits, the hour of that awful sudden wrench from all we have ever known or loved, the long farewell to sun, moon, stars, and light—brother men, I ask you this day, and I ask myself, humbly and fearfully, *What* will then be finished? When it is finished, what will it be? Will it be the butterfly existence of pleasure, the mere life of science, a life of uninterrupted sin and selfish gratification; or will it be, "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do"

THE END.

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